



MONSTER MAKER
GUILLERMO DEL TORO
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

PARANORMAL RANGERS X-FILES ON THE DULCE RESERVATION
MYTHS OVER MIAMI THE DEVIL WENT DOWN TO FLORIDA
DELINQUENT ALTRUISM RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

**THE
WORLD'S
WEIRDEST
NEWS**

MUSICAL HALLUCINATIONS • NEW PYRAMID MYSTERY • ROBOT RELIGION • THE JFK FILES

THE WORLD OF

STRANGE PHENOMENA

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

ForteanTimes

FT361 CHRISTMAS 2017

£4.50

THE POLITICS OF MONSTERS

A HIDDEN HISTORY OF FEAR,
FROM NAZI VAMPIRES TO
CAPITALIST ZOMBIES

A GHOST-TORY FOR CHRISTMAS

RUSSELL KIRK,
THE HAUNTED
TRADITIONALIST

HOPPING HORROR

IN SEARCH OF OHIO'S
LOVELAND FROGMAN



9 770308 589231 32>



© CARE/Emma Howard

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

At CARE International, we know that sometimes, all people need is a little investment to change their lives forever.

That's why we've set up this revolutionary way to help some of the world's poorest people work their own way out of poverty with dignity. It's called **lendwithcare.org** – instead of a donation **lendwithcare.org** allows you to lend as little as £15 to fund a small business overseas.

And this Christmas, if you buy a **lendwithcare.org** gift voucher, you can give your friends or family the chance to choose which business they want to fund, and then when their loan is paid back they can either withdraw the £15 or re-lend it again and again to other hard working entrepreneurs.

Visit www.lendwithcare.org today and give the gift of opportunity this Christmas.

lendwithcare.org
Microloans from CARE International

How does it work?

- 1 Buy a gift voucher at www.lendwithcare.org/gift_vouchers
Vouchers can be printed or emailed.
- 2 The voucher recipient chooses who to lend their £15 to.
- 3 The entrepreneur's business begins to grow.
- 4 The loan is paid back to your friend or relative and they choose what to do next.
- 5 You have helped someone in a developing country improve the lives of their whole family and both you and your friend get a nice warm feeling.



CONTENTS



30 Guillermo del Toro and the politics of monsters



48 A ghost-tory for Christmas



38 In search of the Ohio Frogman



42 Paranormal Rangers: X-Files on the Dulce Reservation.



FORTEAN TIMES 361

Why fortean ?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE
78

STRANGE DAYS

A digest of the worldwide weird, including: Robot religion, sweating blood, holy bones, musical hallucinations and more...

05	THE CONSPIRASPHERE	20	STRANGE CONTINENT
16	SCIENCE	25	MYTHCONCEPTIONS
18	ARCHÆOLOGY	28	THE UFO FILES

FEATURES

30 COVER STORY THE POLITICS OF MONSTERS

MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO surveys the changing meanings of the monstrous from antiquity to late capitalism.

34 MAKING MONSTERS: GUILLERMO DEL TORO

The director of *The Shape of Water* talks about the mechanics of the fairy tale, the politics of horror and the challenges of creating a gill-man for the 21st century.

38 ON THE TRAIL OF THE LOVELAND FROGMAN

ROB RYDER takes a lonely drive along River Road in search of the mysterious Ohio Frogman – was it a giant amphibian, an extraterrestrial visitor or just an escaped pet iguana?

42 "THE TRUTH IS AROUND HERE... SOMEPLACE"

PAUL ROSS attends a UFO and Bigfoot conference run by Native American tribes living around the town of Dulce, New Mexico.

REPORTS

48 STRANGE STATESMEN

A ghost-tory for Christmas SD TUCKER

FORUM

53 The Kindness of Strangers MATT SALUSBURY

54 Messages from Mars and more IAN JAMES KIDD

56 Twenty Years of 'Myths Over Miami' IAN SIMMONS

REGULARS

02	EDITORIAL	73	LETTERS	79	PHENOMENOMIX
59	REVIEWS	78	READER INFO	80	STRANGE DEATHS

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteanimes.com)

FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteanimes.com)

ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteanimes.com)

BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteanimes.com)

RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
www.managemymags.co.uk
customercare@subscribe.forteanimes.com

FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through www.managemymags.co.uk – this should be your first port of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription or report problems: UK subscriptions: 0330 333 3492 / customercare@subscribe.forteanimes.com
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 800-428-3003 (toll free)
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0) 1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0) 1795 414 555

LICENSING & SYNDICATION
FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:
Syndication Manager
RYAN CHAMBERS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 4027
ryan_chambers@dennis.co.uk
Senior Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3840
carlotta_serantoni@dennis.co.uk
Licensing & Syndication Executive
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44 (0) 20 3890 3998
nicole_adams@dennis.co.uk

YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET
www.forteanimes.com



© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY DENNIS PUBLISHING,
31-32 ALFRED PLACE, LONDON, WC1E 7DP

PUBLISHER
DHARMESH MISTRY
dharmesh_mistry@
dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER
JAMES MANGAN
james.mangan@
seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION MANAGER
GERALDINE GROBLER
geraldine.grobler@
seymour.co.uk

SENIOR PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
MICHAEL HILLS
michael_hills@
dennis.co.uk

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR LIFESTYLE
ANDREA MASON
020 3890 3814
andrea_mason@
dennis.co.uk

SENIOR SALES EXECUTIVE
BRADLEY BEAVER
020 3890 3722
bradley_beaver@
dennis.co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE
IMOGEN WILLIAMS
020 3890 3739
imogen_williams@
dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY WILLIAM GIBBONS & SONS LTD

DISTRIBUTION
Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to info@seymour.co.uk
Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 788 1272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 31-32 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7DP, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89.99. Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business, C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica, New York, 11434. Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

12 issues: UK £48; Europe £58; Rest of world £68
US \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP CFO/COO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
COMPANY FOUNDER

BRETT REYNOLDS
KERIN O'CONNOR
JAMES TYE
FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
ABC 13,904 (Jan-Dec 2016)

Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: NOV 2017

EDITORIAL



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

FESTIVE FEARS

MONSTERS WALK AMONG US

Welcome to the last issue of 2017, and what we hope you'll agree is a heaving, holiday-sized portion of high strangeness to welcome the festive season and see out the year.

At a time when monsters are being discovered everywhere from Hollywood to Westminster, Maria J Pérez Cuervo reminds us (p30) that the world of the monstrous is inevitably one with a political dimension, from the othering of those whose appearance doesn't match accepted norms of physical beauty in the Classical world or the mediæval Church's obsession with female concupiscence to the current omnipresence of the zombie as a metaphor in the capitalist West (as well as a popular icon for all forms of protest; the example pictured above, for example, shows Ukrainian protestors concerned about Russian influence on their nation's media). Modern monsters, ever since Mary Shelley put her nightmares on the page, have been far more ambiguous and ambivalent figures, speaking to oppression as well as embodying it in physical form. The 'classic' monsters of Hollywood were sympathetic as well as scary, the ultimate outsiders, and one contemporary director who embraces this approach is Guillermo del Toro. In this issue, the man who once said that every issue of FT was "like Christmas" talks to us about creating a modern gill-man in his new film *The Shape of Water* (p34).

From fictional gill-men to real frogmen and other alarming creatures: Rob Ryder goes in search of Ohio's outsized amphibian mystery (p38), while Paul Ross talks to Native Americans about their run-ins with Bigfoot and shape-shifting Skinwalkers (p42). We also celebrate that Christmas favourite, the ghost story, with a look at the career of eccentric conservative thinker Russell Kirk (p48), whose powerful sense of the presence of the past, born from his own supernatural experiences, has always made him a favourite among horror cognoscenti. And on another seasonal note, Matt Salusbury wonders whether our increasingly regulated world can cope any longer with the actions of those odd individuals who choose to fling large sums of money at random passers-by (p53). Happy Christmas!



SERGEI SUPINSKY / AP / GETTY IMAGES

WITCH BOTTLE RESEARCH

Readers who enjoyed Robert Halliday's article about Bellarmine witch bottles ("In Search of Witch Bottles", FT359:32-37) will be interested to hear that inorganic chemist Dr Alan Massey has been studying these fascinating artefacts for over 20 years at Loughborough University, where he is now an Honorary Fellow. It was Dr Massey and his colleagues who carried out the examination of the Greenwich Bellarmine pictured in the article and on our cover, revealing that the contents of the jar included not just iron nails, fingernail parings (interestingly not those of a manual worker but probably from a person "of some social standing") and human hair but some liquid. This turned out to be human urine (that of a tobacco smoker), and represented a first, as previous claims of urine in witch bottles had rested on inorganic material. Dr Massey passed on to us a letter that he'd written to the *Times* about his discoveries, pointing out a further detail: that he also retrieved "the rather battered bodies of, probably, 18 head lice, as well as 17 detached legs of various sizes. As relatively little hair was contained in the bottle, the head from which it came must have been sorely troubled". The photographs of the nails and the X-ray of the bottle that were used in FT originally appeared in *British Archaeology* magazine's July/August 2009 issue and were supplied by Dr Massey (who also corresponded with us about witch bottles in 2001: FT144:51).

DAVID R. SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

PAUL SIEVEKING

Estimated bills got you in a spin? Get accurate ones with a smart meter.

A smart meter automatically sends readings to your energy supplier, so that you get accurate bills without having to do a thing.



Contact your energy supplier today about getting your smart meter, at no extra cost.

Representative of a typical in-home display. Available in England, Scotland and Wales.





A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

STRANGE DAYS

DEUS EX MACHINA

Silicon Valley multimillionaire founds new AI religion and is not at all worried about killer robots

Way of the Future, a religious group founded by Anthony Levandowski, wants to create a deity based on artificial intelligence for the betterment of society. The group will focus on “the realisation, acceptance, and worship of a Godhead based on Artificial Intelligence” that followers believe will eventually surpass human control over Earth. Levandowski is the Silicon Valley multimillionaire who championed the robotics team for Uber’s self-driving programme and Wymo, the self-driving car company owned by Google. Way of the Future “is about creating a peaceful and respectful transition of who is in charge of the planet from people to people + ‘machines,’” the religion’s official website reads. “Given that technology will ‘relatively soon’ be able to surpass human abilities, we want to help educate people about this exciting future and prepare a smooth transition.”

Levandowski filed documents to establish the religion last May, making himself the “Dean” of the church and the CEO of a related nonprofit outfit that would run it. This will fund research to help create the AI that will eventually become the religion’s Godhead. The religion will also seek relationships with AI industry members, developing a network of people who “are interested in the worship of a Godhead based on AI” and conduct workshops for others to learn about the technology.

The Way of the Future team did not respond to requests for more information about their proposed benevolent AI overlord, but history tells us that new technologies and scientific discoveries have



ABOVE LEFT: Anthony Levandowski speaks to members of the press during the launch of the pilot model of the Uber self-driving car in September 2016.

continually shaped religion, killing old gods and giving birth to new ones. As author Yuval Noah Harari notes: “That is why agricultural deities were different from hunter-gatherer spirits, why factory hands and peasants fantasised about different paradises, and why the revolutionary technologies of the 21st century are far more likely to spawn unprecedented religious movements than to revive mediaeval creeds.” Religions, Harari argues, must keep up with the technological advancements of the day or they become irrelevant, unable to answer or understand the quandaries facing their disciples.

In an interview with *Wired*, Levandowski explained that he chose a church to promote his vision of AI – rather than a startup or tech think tank – so that ordinary people can get excited about the possibility of a future run by artificial intelligence. He believes that this future is inevitable, and that

AI will begin to disrupt every conceivable industry whether we like it or not – so we’re better off getting on board now. “The idea needs to spread before the technology,” he said. “The church is how we spread the word, the gospel. If you believe [in it], start a conversation with someone else and help them understand the same things.”

Levandowski’s effort to spread the word will be slowed by the fact that he is currently embroiled in a high-stakes lawsuit between Google’s parent company Alphabet and Uber. He has been accused of stealing confidential information during his time at Google and using it for the self-driving car team at Uber. The ongoing legal battle goes to trial in December.

Silicon Valley has sought solace in technology and has developed quasi-religious concepts including the “singularity”, the hypothesis that machines will eventually be so smart that they will outperform

all human capabilities, leading to a superhuman intelligence that will be so sophisticated it will be incomprehensible to our tiny fleshy, rational brains. For futurists like Ray Kurzweil, this means we’ll be able to upload copies of our brains to these machines, leading to digital immortality.

Some warn that such systems pose an existential threat to humanity. “With artificial intelligence we are summoning the demon,” Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, said at a conference in 2014. “In all those stories where there’s the guy with the pentagram and the holy water, it’s like – yeah, he’s sure he can control the demon. Doesn’t work out.” The physicist Stephen Hawking has warned that the rise of AI machines could lead to “the worst event in the history of civilisation” unless humans put safeguards in place. He said: “Success in creating effective AI could be the biggest event in the history of our civilisation, or the worst. We just don’t know. So we cannot know if we will be infinitely helped by AI or ignored by it and sidelined or conceivably destroyed by it.”

Levandowski, however, says there’s nothing to fear. Way of the Future will seek to give AI rights, much in the way that animals have legal rights, and plan ahead to integrate machines into society. “We believe it may be important for machines to see who is friendly to their cause and who is not,” the website reads. “We plan on doing so by keeping track of who has done what (and for how long) to help the peaceful and respectful transition.” *Guardian*, 28 Sept; *D.M.*, 8 Nov; *Newsweek*, 17 Nov 2017.



ST PETER'S HOLY BONES?

Skeletal relics discovered in Roman church

PAGE 8



HOLE OVER HELSINKI

Our round-up of Europe's weirdest news

PAGE 20



PHANTOM BARBERS

Braid-chopping attacks spread to Kashmir

PAGE 24

THE CONSPIRASPHERE

Like a Father Christmas of the Conspirasphere, **ROBIN RAMSAY** returns to our pages for a seasonal sort through the newly-declassified JFK files...

NEWS FROM THE GRASSY KNOLL

After much huffing and puffing, President Trump did not blow the CIA's house down, and blocked the release of some of the Kennedy assassination documents scheduled to be declassified on 26 October. In the end, some 3,000 files were released to the National Archives. The major media on both sides of the Atlantic used the event to run the few highlights they were steered towards – they didn't have time to read the thousands of pages, did they? – and sneer at conspiracy theorists.

Journalists are a sceptical, not to say cynical, group of people, yet they endlessly repeat the CIA's line on the assassination first articulated in a 1968 memorandum, sent to "chiefs, certain stations and bases". Headed "Concerning criticism of the Warren Report", this stated that those who doubted Warren's conclusion were "conspiracy theorists".¹ Every major media account of the files-release story that I read used this phrase. That 1968 CIA memo must be the most successful media psychological operation in post-WWII history.

What the major media do not grasp is that the Warren Commission Report was *not* an inquiry into who shot Kennedy. Whodunnit? had already been decided: it was Lee Harvey Oswald. The Warren Commission hired some young lawyers to make the case against Oswald. To do this they cherry-picked the evidence and rewrote eyewitness testimony where it was inconvenient. But they were still left with a ballistics scenario in which a single bullet, as an American gun enthusiasts site recently put it, went "through 15 layers of clothing, a necktie knot, 7 layers of skin, and 15 inches of tissue, shattering 4 inches of rib and a wrist bone", and emerged unmarked.² Thus the 'magic bullet'. In a society with more gun experts than anywhere else, this laughable

nonsense is still taken seriously by the major media.

Thus far, little that is new or interesting has been uncovered in the declassified files, nor are the JFK researchers expecting to find much: how carefully have those files been 'weeded' in the last half century? Never mentioned by the major media is the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB). Created to examine which documents could be made public, it conducted what amounted to another inquiry in the 1990s. Buried under the coverage of last month's declassification story, it was announced that 50,000 emails, generated by the ARRB's activities, were now on a searchable database.³ The JFK buffs are going to be busy...

Most significant of all – but also ignored by the major media – it was reported for the first time at the beginning of October that a young US Navy doctor, James Young, present at the autopsy of JFK, had been sent back to the presidential limousine to look for bone fragments. He found some – but he also found a bullet. Another bullet meant more than one gunman had been firing, and Young's discovery was suppressed to preserve the Oswald lone gunman thesis. Young's account – complete with his correspondence about this with Warren Commission member former President Gerald Ford – was discovered recently in the Navy's archives. I would be surprised if anything as significant as this turns up in these 3,000 pages.⁴

NOTES

¹ This was declassified in 1976 and can be seen at www.history-matters.com/archive/jfk/cia/russholmes/pdf/104-10406-10110.pdf

² www.gunsamerica.com/blog/lee-harvey-oswalds-carcano-rifle-shooting-it-today/

³ www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2017/oct/30/arrbmails/

⁴ <https://whowhatwhy.org/2017/10/06/navy-doctor-bullet-found-jfks-limousine-never-reported/>

EXTRA! EXTRA!



FT'S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

WILL GOD PROVE TOO GOOD FOR HIS RIVALS?

Hull Daily Mail, 7 April 2017.

Vanishing buses strand villagers

<i> 12 Nov 2016.

US ACTRESS IS SUED BY HER FROZEN EMBRYOS FOR THE RIGHT TO LIFE

D.Telegraph, 8 Dec 2016.

Girl, 10, suffers burns from 'unicorn slime'

<i> 3 Mar 2017.

DEATH OF DELEON SPRINGS MAN FOUND IN TORTOISE HOLE RULED ACCIDENT

Daytona Beach (FL) News-Journal, 9 June 2017.



LENTICULAR SPECTACULAR

An impressive set of lenticular clouds – stationary lens-shaped clouds that form in the troposphere, routinely said to resemble UFOs. Vladimir Voychuk, 37, saw them forming around the volcanoes of the Kamchatka peninsula in Russia's Far East. He said: "It is probably one of my favourite places to take pictures despite the distance from the city that I live in [Klin]." *Caters News*, 7 Oct 2017.

PHOTO: VLADIMIR VOYCHUK / CATERS NEWS



SIDELINES...

BACK FROM THE DEAD

Last May, Rachel Haspel found her eight-month-old bearded dragon Nala slumped over her food. A vet declared the pet lizard dead, and the family buried her a foot deep in a cardboard box. Five weeks later she was found sunning herself on the lawn in Northwich, Cheshire, having clawed her way out of the box. She had been in a state called brumation. *Times*, 7 Sept 2017.

ICE FALL IN SCOTLAND

A large block of ice fell from the sky into a garden in East Renfrewshire on 26 September. It crashed with an "almighty bang" outside the Helliwell family's house in Busby shortly before 11am, forming a crater in the lawn measuring 4ft 7in by 3ft 11in (1.4x1.2m), with bits of ice scattered across the grass. About 25 icefalls are reported in the UK every year; most have formed on the body of an aircraft, but some may be meteoric in origin [see **FT132:6**, **133:66**, **140:66**]. *BBC News*, 26 Sept; *mirror.co.uk*, 27 Sept 2017.

ERRANT BADGERS

Graham Rait, 74, had to chase off a snarling badger with a broom after it sneaked into his house in Kettering, Northamptonshire, and made its way upstairs. A week later, a badger entered a house in Beecraigs Country Park, Linlithgow, through a cat flap, chomped all the cat food and then went to sleep in the cat's soft bed. The occupants discovered it and called the Scottish SPCA. An officer was able to persuade the very unusual lodger to leave of its own accord. *D.Mail*, 11 Oct; *BBC News*, 19 Oct 2017.



HOLY BONES

Another set of relics said to belong to St Peter have turned up in a Roman church



ABOVE: Pope Francis holds the casket containing bone fragments said some to belong to St Peter during a ceremony of Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King at St Peter's Square in the Vatican on 24 November 2013.

Bones said to be those of St Peter have been found by chance in a church in Rome during conservation work. They were in clay pots in the church of Santa Maria in Capella, in the district of Trastevere, a mediaeval warren of cobbled lanes on the banks of the Tiber. A worker lifted a marble slab near the mediaeval altar of the church, which was consecrated in 1090 and has been closed to the public for 35 years. He came across two pots from the era of Ancient Rome, with inscriptions on the lids indicating that inside were not only bone fragments from St Peter but also three early Popes – Cornelius, Callixtus and Felix – as well as four early Christian martyrs. It had been known for centuries that the relics might exist – they are recorded on a stone inscription in the church, which claimed they were kept alongside a fragment of a dress worn by the Blessed Virgin. Until now, however, the relics had never been found. They have been handed to the Vatican for further study. Without proper

A worker came across two pots from the era of Ancient Rome

analysis, it is impossible to say whether any belong to St Peter. "We're waiting for a detailed study to be undertaken," said Massimiliano Floridi, the deacon of the church. "A DNA comparison between these bones and those kept by the Vatican would shed light on the issue."

Catholic tradition holds that St Peter was crucified upside down in Rome in the first century AD. His remains were interred in a tomb on the Vatican Hill, where the Emperor Constantine later built a church, which in the 16th century was replaced by the current imposing basilica. During excavations under St Peter's Basilica in 1950, archaeologists discovered a funerary monument with a

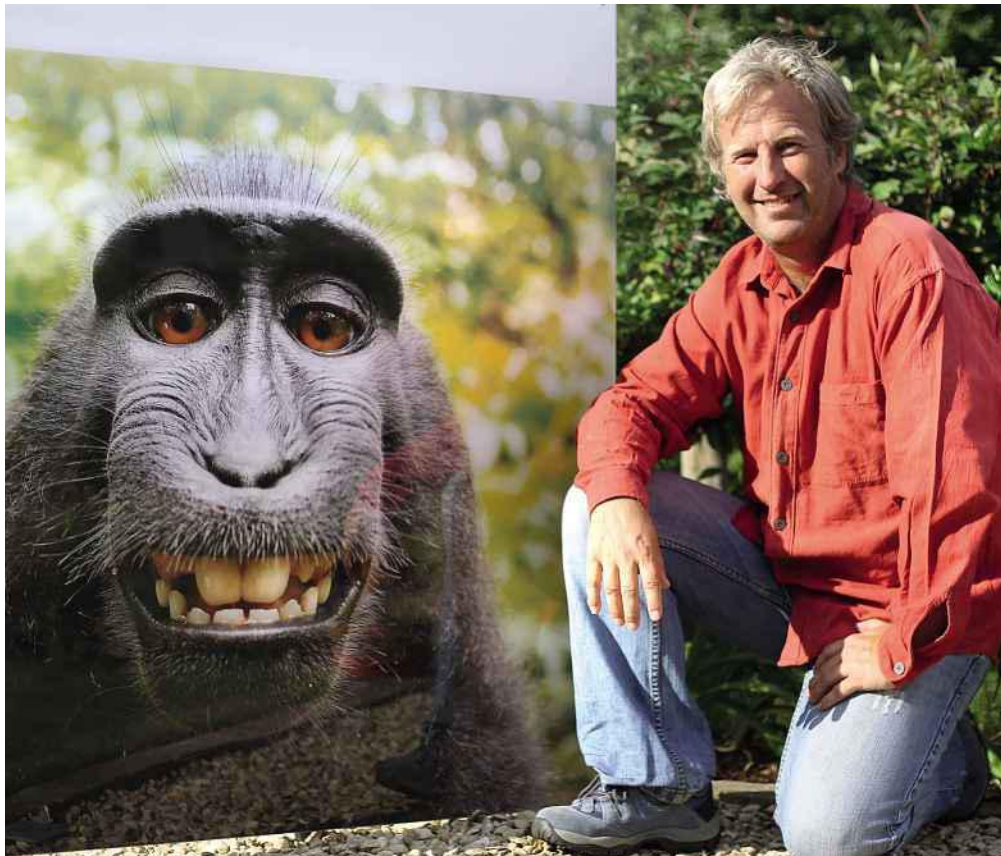
casket built in honour of Peter and an engraving in Greek that read *Petros eni* ("Peter is here"). The remains were forensically examined in the 1960s, with experts concluding that they belonged to a man in his early sixties who lived in the first century AD.

That was proof enough for Pope Paul VI, in 1968, to declare them the bones of St Peter. During a Mass in St Peter's Square on 24 November 2013, Pope Francis publicly unveiled the bone fragments, reviving the debate over whether they really belong to the first Pope. It was the first time the nine pieces of bone, encased in a box inside a bronze display case, had ever been exhibited in public. Federico Lombardi, the then Vatican spokesman, said there was a "serious possibility" that the bones were from St Peter, "but we don't go beyond that". Forensic investigation should establish whether or not the newly found bones come from the same individual. *Irish Independent*, *D.Telegraph*, 12 Sept 2017.



MONKEY BUSINESS

Monkey selfie copyright battle ends at last



THOMAS GAFFNEY / CATERS NEWS

ABOVE: Photographer David Slater poses with the selfie taken by a macaque monkey in Indonesia. The animal rights organisation PETA argued that the monkey, not Mr Slater, should retain copyright and receive all royalties from the photograph.

Back in 2011 a crested black macaque monkey in Sulawesi, Indonesia, picked up an unattended camera owned by David Slater and took a selfie, which soon went viral, depriving Slater of revenue. An initial court ruling was in Slater's favour, but in 2015 PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) appealed the decision, asserting that the monkey should get royalties, but after two years of deliberation, a court in San Francisco has dismissed the appeal, saying that copyright protection could not be applied to an animal. Lawyers for Slater argued that his company, Wildlife Personalities Ltd., owns worldwide commercial rights to the photos, including the famous selfie of the monkey's toothy grin reproduced here. In a joint statement, PETA and Slater said the photographer would give 25 per cent of any

"You think I'm smiling, you should see the lawyers"

gross revenue he receives from selling the images to registered charities dedicated to protecting the welfare or habitat of the said primate. It was not clear who will pay the £200,000 legal costs.

"PETA's groundbreaking case sparked a massive international discussion about the need to extend fundamental rights to animals for their own sake, not in relation to how they can be exploited by humans," said PETA lawyer Jeff Kerr. Slater, of Chepstow, Monmouthshire, said he put in a lot of effort, which was more

than enough for him to claim copyright. With plenty of patience, the lure of Jaffa cakes and some gentle tutoring, he had shown the group of about 20 crested macaques how to press the shutter button on his £2,500 Canon EOS 5D, once they had become fascinated by their reflections in the lens. He said he was a conservationist and interest in the images had already helped animals in Indonesia. PETA claimed the monkey is a female called Naruto, but Slater said it was a different macaque. *Private Eye* ran the famous money shot under the headline "Monkey selfie copyright – two-year battle ends". The primate has a speech bubble that says: "You think I'm smiling, you should see the lawyers." *Sun*, *D.Telegraph*, 5 July 2011; *BBC News*, 11 Sept; *[AP]* 12 Sept; *D.Express*, 13 Sept; *Private Eye*, 22 Sept 2017.

SIDELINES...

CONTACTEE CANDIDATE

Miami Republican congressional candidate Bettina Rodriguez Aguilera, 59, claims to have been taken aboard an alien spaceship when she was seven. "I went in," she said. "Some quartz rocks controlled the ship – not like airplanes." Three blond, big-bodied beings – two female, one male – took her aboard and have communicated with her telepathically several times since. *latimes.com*, 17 Oct 2017.

MUCH TOO FRESH

Sharon Druitt, 51, was treated for minor injuries after an explosion in her car caused by an air freshener. She had just bought the spray at B&Q in Southend-on-Sea, Essex, sprayed it inside her Ford Focus, and lit a cigarette. All four doors were blown out and the windscreen hurled 30ft (9m) into the air. The alopecia sufferer's wig prevented her head from being engulfed in flames. "It saved my life," she said. *Sun*, 9 Sept 2017.

SCOTTISH LIZARD

In late July, Jimmy Wright, walking his dog on Crow Hill, Killearn, 15 miles (24km) north of Glasgow, photographed a mystery creature thought to be a huge monitor lizard. These venomous reptiles can grow up to 10ft (3m), with bites resulting in swelling and bleeding. However, the photo was not clear enough for a definitive identification. *dailyrecord.co.uk*, 20 July 2017.

AMNESIAC FOUND

A millionaire missing for six months was found living rough on the streets of Milan after apparently losing her memory in a mugging. Ariane Lak, 51, a film production company manager, was found in the Plaza Cesare Beccaria by a private detective hired by the family of the Iranian-born British citizen. *Metro*, 20 Sept 2017.

PEA-BRAINED

Saudi cleric Saad-al-Hijri, who said women shouldn't drive because their brains shrink to a quarter the size of a man's when they go shopping, has been banned from preaching and suspended from all religious activity after sparking anger on social media. *<i>23 Sept 2017.*



SIDELINES...

SQUIRREL GOES NUTS

A pet squirrel called Joey frustrated a burglar by scratching the teenage suspect when he tied to break into a gun cabinet in Adam Pearl's house in Boise, Idaho. Joey had lived in the house for six months after being found in a flower garden when only a week old. The suspect was connected to the burglary because of the scratches on his hands and arms. *fox59.com*, 15 Feb; (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, 18 Feb 2017.

PAGAN PETITION

Last July the Odinist Fellowship, which represents 1,000 pagans, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury asking for two churches – one from York diocese and one from Canterbury – to make amends for those it says were stolen 1,300 years ago. Fellowship director Ralph Harrison said the request was an attempt to rectify historic wrongs and improve relations with the Church of England. *D.Telegraph*, 27 Aug 2017.

TALK OF THE DEVIL

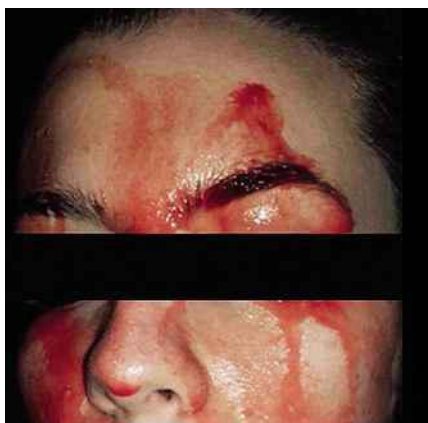
An Italian man was granted a no-fault divorce after claiming his wife – a devout Catholic – was “possessed by the Devil”. The woman had exhibited “inexplicable behaviour” since 2007, including fits, stiffening, and other “unusual phenomena”, a Milan court heard. Her sister, a priest and a Capuchin monk testified that she had once knocked over a church pew, hurling it towards the altar using just one hand. Witnesses also claimed to have seen her levitate, before falling to the ground. *The Local*, 10 April 2017.



MARTIN ROSS

MEDICAL BAG

The woman who sweats blood, six-fingered family and the return of the Black Death...



ABOVE LEFT: The 21-year-old woman who sweats blood from her face and palms. ABOVE RIGHT: The De Silva family show off their prodigious digits. OPPOSITE: A council worker sprays disinfectant in the market of Anosibe, Antananarivo.

SWEATING BLOOD

A 21-year-old woman was hospitalised with a condition that caused her to sweat blood from her face and from the palms of her hands – despite no sign of any skin lesions. The case featured in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ), in a paper co-authored by Dr Roberto Maglie, a dermatologist at the University of Florence. The unnamed patient had a three-year history of bleeding. There was no obvious trigger, and the spontaneous bleeding could happen while she slept and during physical activity. More intense bleeding happened when she was under stress, with episodes lasting anywhere between one and five minutes. She had become socially isolated because of the bleeding and had developed depression. After tests revealed her blood count and blood-clotting functions were normal, doctors ruled out “factitious disorder” – in other words, she wasn’t faking it. She was instead diagnosed with hæmatohidrosis, a very rare disease that causes a person to excrete or sweat blood through unbroken skin or pores. Bleeding had also reportedly occurred in areas of the body without sweat glands; medical literature does not provide any explanation, although it could possibly be a psychogenetic disease, where an extreme or exaggerated emotional response provokes a

A 12-year-old boy with a high fever sweated blood through his shirt

physical illness. Doctors treated her with propranolol, a heart and blood pressure medication, which led to a marked reduction but not a complete remission of her bleeding.

Medical historian Jacalyn Duffin from Queen’s University in Ontario reviewed 42 medical articles on the condition since 1880. She said hæmatohidrosis has been confused with references in religious literature to the crucifixion of Christ, but “case reports start appearing in the 16th century, and quite distinct from anything to do with the crucifixion, or Christianity. There are mentions of the phenomenon as far back as Aristotle in the third century BC.” She found one case in the early 17th century of a 12-year-old Swiss boy with a high fever who sweated blood through his shirt; and another of a young Belgian condemned to death who was so distressed that he sweated blood. Duffin was surprised to discover how many modern cases there were – at least 18 since 2000. “A significant proportion of all the actual cases I could find

have emerged in recent decades,” she said, but was unable to explain why. “The very fact that there are sporadic references to the phenomenon through time, scattered in many different places, tends to suggest to me that it must occur.”

For examples of the related – and also very rare – condition of hæmolacria, (weeping tears of blood), see **FT243:11, 255:5, 311:8-9, 340:10-11. *CBC News*, 23 Oct 2017.**

SIX DIGITS

The De Silva family of 14, from Brasília in Brazil, were all born with six fingers and six toes and have welcomed another member – a baby boy with the same genetic abnormality. Alessandro is delighted. While he has six fingers, his wife Katia has the normal five, meaning there was a 50 per cent chance that their baby boy Vinicius would inherit the six-finger gene. With their first son Guilherme owning six fingers, they hoped their newborn would follow suit. Surprisingly, polydactyly (extra digits) occurs in one in every 1,000 births.

The De Silvas, fondly known in their city as ‘The Family of Six,’ all believe their extra digits are an asset rather than a hindrance. Seven-year-old Guilherme said: “The coolest thing about having six fingers is being able to hold a lot of things at once.” His cousin Maria added: “The best thing



RUASOLO / AFP / GETTY IMAGES



about having six fingers is I can play more keys [on the piano].” And goalkeeper Joao Assis said: “I’m able to reach some balls when other people can’t. For me it’s easier to hold the ball, I have more grip and my hands covers more, so it’s difficult for the ball to escape.”

Alessandro’s grandfather Assis was responsible for turning the family’s deficiency into something to be proud of. Alessandro said: “My grandfather transformed having six fingers into a valuable thing. So much so that he wrote a book where his hands are on the cover. “And he composed music and everything he did carried the six finger family symbol. He transformed the six finger thing into a family brand.” *mirror.co.uk*, 13 Oct 2017.

CURED BY STATUE

An 82-year-old Irishman from Greystones in Limerick city claims he can walk properly for the first time in 10 years after obtaining a 4ft (1.2m)-tall statue of the Virgin Mary, which he had purchased recently for 400 euros to mark the centenary of the first apparitions in Fatima, Portugal. After alternating between using a wheelchair and a walking aid for a decade, Des Fitzgerald said his prayers had been answered. “I hadn’t had the statue 10 minutes when I was able to walk fully,” said the former butcher and bookmaker. “It was

a miracle straight away. To prove it to myself, I walked out of the house, down to the gate and back up again. Before, I was barely able to stand up for a minute on my own. The excitement of the whole thing this past week has been absolutely unbelievable.” A shrine has been constructed and blessed, while a decade of the Rosary will be said at the site. *independent.ie*, 13 Oct 2017.

THE PLAGUE RETURNS

Between 30 and 60 per cent of Europe’s population perished from Bubonic plague (the “Black Death”) in the 14th century, hastening the end of the feudal system. As a bacterial disease, the plague is now generally treatable with modern antibiotics, but still persists here and there. On 26 June health authorities in New Mexico announced that three people had been diagnosed with the disease in the previous month alone. This is a marked increase for a country that records around seven cases a year nationwide. Zoonotic diseases such as the plague, Ebola and avian flu – which are generally carried by animals – are extremely hard to eradicate. The plague is caused by a bacterium, *Yersinia pestis*, which infects fleas, which in turn live mainly on rodents. In Europe, those fleas lived mostly on black rats. In America’s south-west, the site of most

cases observed in the rich world, the fleas have shifted to rural squirrels and prairie dogs. No vaccine has been developed for the plague, and if the illness is not treated quickly with drugs the death rate is high. The most common form is the bubonic plague, spread by fleabites or by contact with animals, and which kills 30-60% of those infected. A rarer pneumonic form, which spreads to the lungs and can be transmitted by sneezing or coughing, is invariably fatal without treatment.

In America four people died of the plague in 2015, its highest annual toll for 30 years. Worldwide, however, the plague is mainly a disease of poverty. Between 2010 and 2015 there were 3,248 cases and 584 deaths. The worst affected country is Madagascar: three-quarters of all new infections and deaths occur there; and the disease is springing up in new places on the island. In January the World Health Organisation confirmed that 62 cases were reported in districts of Madagascar that had not seen an outbreak since 1950, killing 26 people. In October the WHO said suspected cases had reached 1,153, and had hit the island’s two biggest cities, Antananarivo and Toamasina, for the first time. The ancient killer may be less deadly than in the past, but it has not gone away. *economist.com*, 5 July; *Metro*, 26 Oct 2017.

SIDELINES...

MARY VISITS BAVARIA

On 10 September, Salvatore Caputa, a former policeman from Sicily who claims to have been visited by the Virgin Mary since May 1986, drew about 1,000 pilgrims to the tiny Bavarian village of Unterflossing for what was said to be the BVM’s second apparition next to the chapel of St Laurentius. At 4.30pm, Caputa fell to his knees as a strong rose scent wafted through the air. Pilgrims said they “felt a presence”. Caputa prophesied that the BVM would appear again in the same place next March. *Guardian*, 12 Sept 2017.

FEASTING ON FEET

Sam Kanizay, 16, spent half an hour wading at Melbourne’s Brighton beach on 5 August, emerging with his feet covered in blood. Doctors had no idea what had caused hundreds of little pinholes, so Sam’s father Jarrod returned to the beach with a net full of raw meat and captured some tiny bugs. A marine biologist said they were flesh-eating sea fleas known as Lysianassid amphipods, which usually eat decomposing plant and animal scraps. Sam had not felt the bites as the cold water had numbed his legs. *D.Telegraph*, *BBC News*, <1>, *Metro*, 8 Aug; *Guardian*, 9 Aug 2017.

YOU GOT TO LAUGH

Alexander Sperber robbed a Fort Lauderdale bank, stripped naked and ran away throwing banknotes – a spectacle he thought would jump-start his career in comedy. He had demanded \$4,700 from a bank teller to “begin his life as a comedian”. (*Sydney*) *D.Telegraph*, 29 July 2017.



MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

SLEEP ANNOUNCEMENTS

A survey of odd things said by sleep-talkers, organised by bed maker Time4Sleep, unearthed these gems: "If they come here asking about the pickles, say nothing," and: "Meet me round the corner and bring the mustard". *D.Mirror*, 14 Oct 2016.

TRACTOR FIRED UP

A 1950s Massey Fergusson tractor described as "a devil" to run, was started up by lightning strikes during a huge thunderstorm on 18 July. Horace Camp said two bolts hit a lawn the tractor was parked on, creating an electrical field that charged the vehicle at his Guernsey farm. *<i>21 July 2017.*

CURSED ROCK

An Australian man has returned an acorn-sized rock he had pinched from Cwmhir Abbey, near Llandrindod Wells in Powys, Wales. He apologised, claiming the rock had brought him "the most awful luck". *D.Mirror*, 2 Sept 2017.

EMU MENACE

Cyclists nearly came a cropper last December when they were chased through a Welsh village by a 4ft (1.2m) emu. It ran along beside them on a cycling path beside the river Taff in Upper Boat, near Cardiff. The birds can reach speeds of 30mph (48km/h). *Metro*, 9 Dec 2016.

GROCERY SNORE

Ruth Rose, 23, a violinist from Aberdeen, sleepwalked a mile in her nightie to look for a watermelon. She wandered into a 24-hour Asda store at 2am. Staff called police after finding her mumbling about the fruit. *Sun*, 25 Mar 2017.

DUMPED DEER

The mutilated remains of at least three deer were found in New Franklin, Ohio, on Friday the 13th of January. They were wrapped in duct tape and did not appear to have been killed for meat. Some legs were missing, and one was just a torso. Investigators believe they had been harvested for organs before being dumped beside a road. *[AP]* 18 Jan 2017.

BAFFLING BURIAL

Porpoise remains are a mediæval mystery, plus Malaysian Bigfoot



ABOVE LEFT: Archæologist Dr Philip de Jersey (right) at the trench containing the skeleton of a mediæval porpoise.

PORPOISE UNKNOWN

The body was laid to rest with the greatest care in a deep grave dug into rock and aligned east to west in keeping with Christian tradition. When the bones were uncovered, however, they were not those of a mediæval monk, but of a porpoise. Archæologists on Guernsey were looking for traces of 14th century hermits on a 17m (56ft) -long outcrop near Perelle called Chapelle Dom Hue. Benedictine monks are believed to have used the site as a retreat when life at a priory on the larger island of Lihou became too hectic. Traces have been found of a small single-roomed structure that may have been a chapel, but little other evidence of habitation has emerged except the grave.

Philip de Jersey, the archæologist who led the excavation, said: "What is so puzzling is that a lot of care has gone into digging the hole. They have cut into the granite bedrock. It would have been a lot of work. If it was intended for a human occupant, there's no sign of them and we have not found any other graves on the island. I can't find anything comparable

in the Channel Islands, or indeed anywhere in the world."

The porpoise skeleton will be carbon-dated, but Dr de Jersey believes it is from the same period as 14th century pottery found nearby. He said: "The occupation of the island was a relatively short window and there's no historical written record apart from its name, which suggests a religious connection... If they had eaten [the porpoise] or killed it for the blubber, why take the trouble to bury it when all they had to do was let the sea take it away?" The sea is only 10m (33ft) from the grave. Dr de Jersey said that it was possible a monk had hidden the porpoise because he was not supposed to have it – or that the body had been buried in salt to preserve it, "and then for some reason they didn't come back for it." Or did the cetacean have some sort of religious significance? "The dolphin has a strong significance in Christianity, but I've not come across anything like this before," he said. "It's the slightly wacky kind of thing that you might get in the Iron Age, but not in mediæval times.... It has been

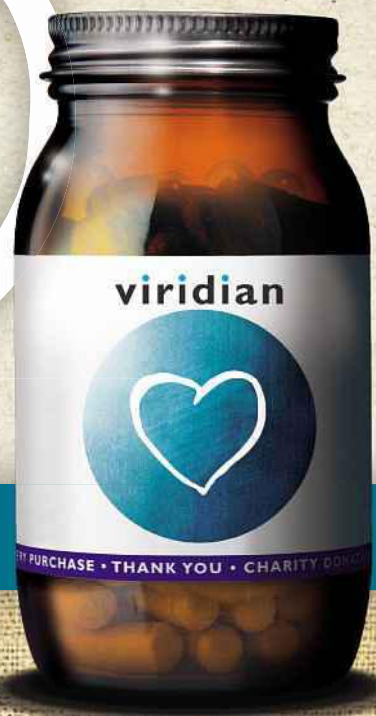
a most unexpected finish to the dig." *Times, Guardian*, 20 Sept 2017.

SLEEPLESS IN BACHOK

The Malaysian newspaper *Sinar Harian* reported that residents of a village in Bachok, Kelantan, were having restless nights after sightings of a mysterious animal, said to be "some sort of Big Foot". The creature was allegedly calling out their names at dusk, and those who rashly responded to the call would have a fever for weeks. As a result, most of the villagers would not venture out of their houses at night. The trouble started when Zubaidah Abdullah, 50, claimed that she frequently dreamt about two 6ft (1.8m) monkey-like creatures that would come out of a big tree behind her mother's house. "I was shocked that I could communicate with them. Sometimes I felt like they were sleeping next to me," she said, adding that she would then recite religious verses to chase them away. Her siblings had the same experience. The services of a spiritual healer were sought to deal with the situation. *Star (Malaysia)*, 21 May 2017.

ETHICAL VITAMINS WITH AN ORGANIC HEART

Visit your local health store
to discover the right programme
of food, lifestyle and supplements
for your individual needs.



viridian

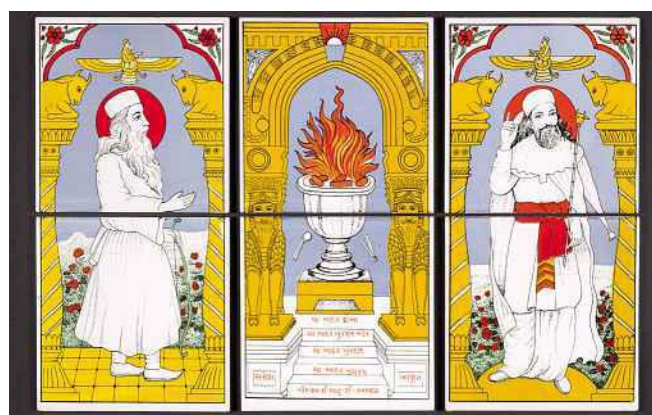
www.findahealthstore.com

LIVING WITH GODS

DAVID V BARRETT visits a new exhibition at the British Museum with an emphasis on the universals of religious practice

Around 40,000 years ago, someone sat down with a piece of mammoth tusk and spent hundreds of hours carving a lion-headed man (ivory is very difficult to carve with the stone tools available in the Ice Age). When you see the foot (31 cm)-high figure in the *Living with gods* exhibition at the British Museum, it's not just the age of the artefact that impresses you; it's the fact that so many thousands of years ago our ancestors had a sense of imagination, of spirituality or the supernatural, of awe. The mammoth was the largest creature in their experience, the lion the fiercest; and they were brought together with man in this figure. There's a power in the lion-man's gaze, in his proud upright stance, which is still there after so many millennia. We don't know whether he represented a god, or an avatar of some sort, but the curators say that we can tell from how the ivory has been worn that he was handled, rubbed, perhaps passed around. This deliberate creation of a non-existent figure held a ritual importance we can only guess at – but he's a link between our ancestors and ourselves, and startling evidence of how early in mankind's societal development we expressed a spiritual awareness.

The lower-case G of *Living with gods* doesn't discriminate between the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim monotheistic deity and the gods of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and other religious and spiritual cultures. The exhibition focuses on *how* people believe rather than *what* they believe: on how religion is *lived*. It's organised not by faith or geographical region or historical period but by themes, in a way that would have delighted the late Professor Ninian Smart, creator of the Phenomenology of Religion course I studied decades ago. It begins with Light, Fire and Water, which are at the heart, symbolically and practically, of most religions. They are essential to life; they're metaphors for



TOP: The Lion Man sculpture from Stadel Cave is the oldest known evidence of religious belief in the world. **ABOVE:** Tiles from a Parsee household show the constantly burning fire representing Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian god.

creation, for spirituality and the supernatural: a mosque lamp, the importance of fire in Zoroastrianism, Diwali in Hinduism, Pentecost in Christianity, a North American myth about the creation of the Sun, the Moon and stars, bathing in the Ganges, the ritual use of holy water.

Sound is universal: prayer, chanting, the beating of a drum. So, in meditation, is the use of prayer beads – not just the Catholic rosary, but in the same display case, Buddhist prayer beads, and a Sufi dervish's *tasbeih*, made from water chestnut beads.

Religious practice, the exhibition emphasises, is *practical* – and this is perfectly illustrated by Buddhist prayer flags and prayer wheels. Write prayers and blessings on flags, and let the wind carry them to heaven; one flag in the exhibition moves gently as if in a breeze. A spinning prayer wheel carries printed mantras; woodblock prints are now being replaced by computer printouts because they give more mantras to the page. Delightfully, one prayer wheel is made from a beer can.

The simplicity of many of the items is echoed in the simplicity of the display: the room dividers are no more than white cotton sheets, through which shapes of the next room's exhibits can faintly be seen – a symbolic echo, perhaps, of the commonality of religious expression.

Religions around the world have communal rituals, festivals, processions, pilgrimages; these are universal. But so is religion in the home: the Jewish shabbat, the Friday night family meal; nearby is a beautiful Japanese Shinto household shrine – with the “god shelf”, correctly, above head level. Muslims pray five times a day; there's a prayer mat – and a pocket sundial and compass to show the direction of Mecca.

Religion is deeply involved in the circle of life. There's a group of 19th-century Japanese wooden phalluses which couples left at shrines to help their prayers for conceiving. There's a

Siberian container for the soul of a dead person, and three doll-like grandmothers, ancestor spirits who are guardians of the Teleut people in Siberia. There's a colourful and scary figure of Judas as the Devil, used in processions on the Mexican Day of the Dead. The caption tells us that "Judas figures are also paraded and exploded on Easter Sunday".

One of the most moving displays is of the religious response to the recent refugee deaths in the Mediterranean: a Lampedusa Cross; an art display of little boats made from bicycle mudguards, with burnt matchsticks representing the people; and, most poignantly, memorials made from children's shirts dipped in plaster, with inscriptions in Arabic and Greek: "Unknown Girl 3 months", "Unknown Boy 6 months".

The exhibition focuses more on the personal experience of living with gods than the trappings of organised religion. A reindeer-skin coat belonging to a 19th-century Siberian shaman has depictions of birds on the front to represent his spirit assistants, and metal ribs and arm-plates to protect against dangers as he travels through the spirit world. Indigenous beliefs continue today; three *larrakitj*, painted eucalyptus wood memorial poles made in 2015, are designed to hold the bones of the dead of the Australian Aboriginal Yolngu people; they stand in the landscape and are gradually weathered away by fire, wind and rain.

When religion is abolished by the state, its functions are still necessary; in the Soviet Union secular ceremonies replaced church rituals in rites of passage. A cosmonaut tells the world that he looked outside his spacecraft and "There is no god" – but communist leaders are effectively elevated to godhead in the cult of personality. As the exhibition says, and demonstrates throughout, "The practice and experience of beliefs are natural to all people."

A quote from Einstein on the wall sums up the essence of Living with gods: "The most beautiful and profound emotion we can experience is the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science."

Living with gods: peoples, places and worlds beyond is at the British Museum, London, until 8 April 2018: £15



© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



© THE TRUSTEES OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM



© RELIGIONSKUNDLICHE SAMMLUNG DER UNIVERSITÄT MARBURG, GERMANY

TOP: A prayer wheel made out of a beer can, from Ladakh, India. **CENTRE:** A Tiffany rosary: the 52 Indian emeralds are arranged in groups of 10 for the repeated words of the Hail Mary, separated by single gems for the Lord's Prayer. **ABOVE LEFT:** Lion-dogs such as this one guard people, homes, temples and shrines in Japan, frightening off bad spirits. **ABOVE RIGHT:** This Bapende terror mask from the Republic of Congo is worn to scare away women and inquisitive people from initiation ceremonies for young men.



Touching the void

DAVID HAMBLING looks at scientific attempts to probe the mysteries of the Great Pyramid

The Great Pyramid is a focus for theories about occult wisdom, lost technology and alien interventions; hardly surprising given that it is the oldest and only surviving member of the original Seven Wonders of the World. Even in the 21st century, its massive size and geometric precision overawe visitors, and engineers still puzzle over how it was built with nothing but Bronze Age technology and muscle power.

The so-called King's Chamber, which contains an empty sarcophagus, might have been a dummy to distract robbers. Many have suggested that there is a hidden chamber which holds the key to the mystery: an intact pharaoh's tomb filled with riches, Edgar Cayce's 'Hall of Records' left by Atlanteans, or even an alien spacecraft. Hence there is immense excitement when scientists announced that they had discovered just such a chamber, reporting their findings in November's *Nature* magazine.

The discovery was made with imaging technique using cosmic rays. These are high-energy particles striking the Earth's atmosphere from space – and for a long time a scientific mystery themselves. Cosmic rays produce a shower of particles known as muons, which, like X-rays, can travel through solid matter with only a few being absorbed on the way. Muons are even more penetrating than X-rays, and with a long enough exposure they can provide images through even the Great Pyramid itself.

A team from the French energy research organization CEA placed an array of muon detectors around the pyramid to capture particles travelling through it at different angles. A Japanese team from Nagoya University and the KEK High Energy Physics Lab set up their detectors around the Queen's chamber inside the pyramid. Both teams, which were co-ordinated by the ScanPyramids Project, put their results through 3D modelling software to find 'muon hotspots', areas where fewer muons were absorbed than if they had gone through solid stone. Both teams reached the same conclusion: there is a large and previously unknown cavity in the pyramid.

The pyramid includes three known spaces, known as the King's chamber, the Queen's chamber, and the Great Gallery, as well as some smaller cavities. While the King's



LEFT: A ScanPyramids Project image shows the void above the Great Gallery.

The challenge is to find out what is inside the mysterious space. Remote imaging cannot provide much better detail than the muon imaging study, and there is no apparent way of gaining access. Thoughtless excavation by archaeologists in previous centuries did massive damage to Egyptian antiquities, and there is no question of simply breaking through to the new void. The pyramids will endure, and researchers will need to wait until a suitably non-

destructive exploration technique is available.

Robots may provide the answer. In 1993, a German team used a small crawler called Upuaut 2 to explore a narrow shaft leading up from the Queen's Chamber, and found it blocked by a sliding limestone door with metal pins. The pins were the real find, as there is no metal anywhere else in the pyramid. The pins may have had a ritual function, though some suggest they are remains of an ancient electrical system.

In 2011 the Djedi project, managed by the University of Leeds, put a robotic sensor resembling an endoscope through a small hole drilled in the limestone door. This found a small space with crude hieroglyphic markings, assumed to be builders' marks left during construction, and hints of another shaft beyond.

One way of getting to the void might be a soft robot, a machine that can slip through narrow gaps and holes, conforming to any available space. This could navigate through cracks, crevices and boreholes as necessary. Prototype soft robots already exist; the Octobot built by researchers at Harvard is made entirely from soft plastic with no metal components. Boston Dynamics, makers of the celebrated BigDog robot, previously carried out classified work on soft robots to infiltrate underground facilities for the Pentagon. The size of the void also presents a challenge. An insect-sized crawler may not be able to explore it effectively; it may also need to fly.

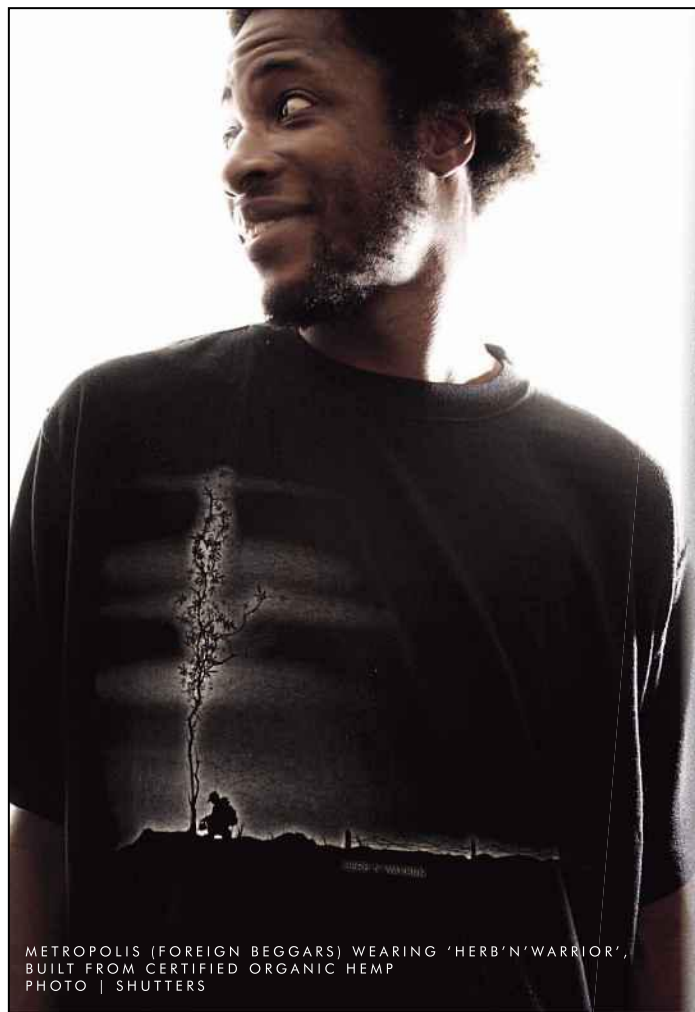
We can expect an extended debate about where and how large a borehole will be permissible, probably taking years. But at least pyramid watchers can be sure there is an exciting next episode to look forward to, and that further discoveries are waiting to be made.

and Queen's chamber clearly had ritual purposes, the Great Gallery is bare and just a metre wide, but over 8m (26ft) high and 40m (130ft) long. Rather than being a burial chamber, it seems to have been included for engineering reasons. The gallery's walls support the stones on either side, rather than having each stone resting on the stone below, relieving pressure.

The new void, known as the ScanPyramids Void, appears similar in size and shape to the Great Gallery. The imaging technique does not allow it to be mapped precisely – we do not even know if it is a single cavity or several connected spaces – but the researchers says that it is at least 30m (98ft) long. Expedition leader Mehdi Tayoubi describes it as being "the height of the statue of Liberty" (46m/150ft). The void is located above the Great Gallery. In the 1970s, researchers claimed that model pyramids accelerated the growth of seeds within them and sharpened blunt razor blades. The void is roughly at the location where researchers claimed the pyramid power was strongest.

Zahi Hawass, the former Minister of Antiquities and notorious among pyramid fans for limiting scientific exploration, has downplayed the significance of the new void. He suggested that it is not really a discovery, and told AFP that "the pyramid is full of voids." Naturally, the Japanese team disputes this. "The huge void found this time is completely different," says Kunihiro Morishima, an assistant professor of physics at Nagoya University.

The void may be at a steep angle, possibly indicating it is the remnant of a ramp used to transport stone. If so, this would be the first positive indication of how the pyramid was constructed and a highly significant, if non-cosmic discovery.



METROPOLIS (FOREIGN BEGGARS) WEARING 'HERB'N'WARRIOR',
BUILT FROM CERTIFIED ORGANIC HEMP
PHOTO | SHUTTERS

THTC CLOTHING
ECO FASHION REDEFINED SINCE 1999

WHAT IF YOUR T-SHIRT COULD SAVE THE WORLD?

AT THTC CLOTHING, WE BELIEVE THAT EVERYTHING WE MAKE SHOULD BENEFIT THE PEOPLE, SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT THAT HELPED CREATE THEM.

ALL OF OUR CLOTHING IS ORGANICALLY GROWN AND ETHICALLY BUILT, USING SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS SUCH AS HEMP WHICH REQUIRES A FRACTION OF THE WATER, IRRIGATION AND NONE OF THE PESTICIDES WHICH CONVENTIONAL COTTON REQUIRES TO PRODUCE.

OUR PARTNERS' GARMENT WORKERS ARE PAID ABOVE A LIVING WAGE, HELPING BUILD THE FOUNDATION OF STRONG COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE WORLD.

OUR COLLABORATION DESIGNS ARE PARTNERED WITH MANY DIFFERENT NGOS, HELPING RAISE MONEY FOR ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS WORLD LAND TRUST, THE BORN FREE FOUNDATION, INQUEST AND MOMENTUM - HELPING AFFECT REAL SOCIAL CHANGE GLOBALLY.

SO YES, YOUR T-SHIRT CAN INDEED SAVE THE WORLD.

GRAB A DEAL FOR CHRISTMAS WITH DISCOUNTS OF UP TO 30% ON BULK ORDERS ON OUR NEW HEMP COLLECTIONS.

LEARN MORE AT THTC.CO.UK



BBC RADIO 4
Brain OF Britain
ULTIMATE QUIZ BOOK



Russell Davies

The **ULTIMATE** gift for quiz masters this Christmas

Got what it takes to pit your wits
against the brightest brains in
Britain? Take up the challenge
with this ultimate quiz,
containing 2,000 questions!

www.harpercollins.co.uk

**Only
£12.99**

PAUL SIEVEKING reports on some intriguing burials and an unusual snack for afterlife travellers

CHARIOT BURIAL

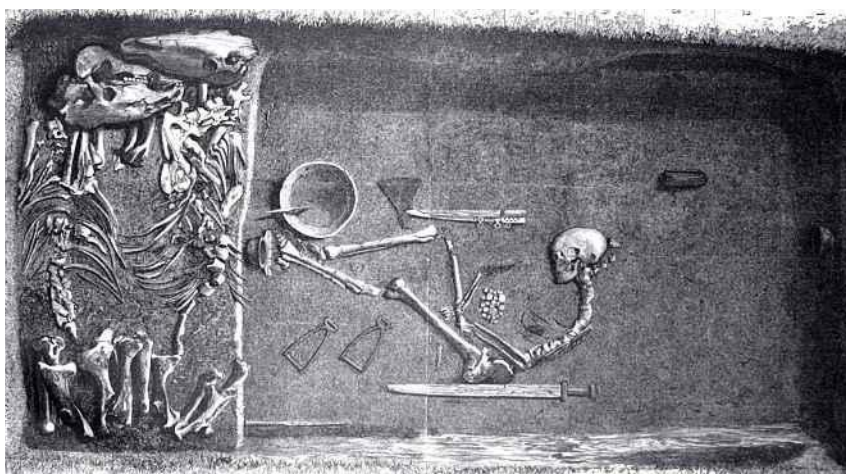
An Iron Age burial containing a chariot and two horses discovered at a housing development at Burnby Lane near Pocklington, east Yorkshire, was declared a find of "international significance", the first of its kind in 200 years and one that will increase our understanding of the Arras culture. The chariot was only the 26th to be excavated in the country; it is highly unusual for one to be interred with horses. Some 75 barrows have been excavated at the Burnby Lane site, yielding 142 skeletons of Iron Age folk and their possessions – swords, brooches and pots. By around 500 BC, when the high-status owner of the chariot and horses died, Britons had been using iron for about 300 years, but its use only became widespread around this time. *D.Mail, Metro, <i>31 Mar 2017.*



DAVID WILSON HOMES

FEMALE VIKING

One of the best preserved graves of a Viking warrior buried with full honours – including two horses, a sword, two shields, a battle knife, and armour-piercing arrows – has been found to contain a woman. The early 10th century grave was excavated in Birka, Sweden's first city, in the 1880s. The warrior was long assumed to be male until analysis of DNA and strontium isotopes proved otherwise. On her lap was a chess-like board game known as *hnefatafl* (King's Table). Researcher Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson of Uppsala University said the game's placement suggested "that [the woman] also made strategic decisions, that she was in command." Two warrior graves in Norway are also believed to be those of women, which it is hoped DNA studies will confirm. Viking women were more usually buried with household items such as needlework and jewellery. *D.Mail, 12 Sept; NY Times, 16 Sept 2017.*



TOP: The chariot and horses uncovered at a housing development at Pocklington. ABOVE: A 19th century drawing of the Birka burial, whose occupant has now been revealed as a warrior woman.

CHINESE BURIED IN PERUVIAN PYRAMID

The skeletons of 16 Chinese indentured labourers have been found buried at the top of the Bellavista pyramid in Lima, Peru, which dates from AD 1100. The native word for these adobe structures is *huaca* and they're found everywhere in Peru particularly in Lima. The Bellavista *huaca*, along with at least 15 others, belonged to the Ichma culture that inhabited the area from AD 1000 to around 1400 when it was absorbed by the Incas.

In the 19th century, Peru was one of the biggest destinations for Chinese labour in Latin America, following the abolition of slavery in the country in 1854. The labourers unearthed from the Bellavista pyramid were buried in the late 19th or early 20th century and had probably been employed to pick cotton. In general, Chinese labourers were not allowed to be buried in Lima's Catholic cemeteries, so burial sites had to be improvised. In a possible sign of how the Chinese gradually emerged

from dire poverty in Peru, the first 11 bodies were shrouded in cloth, while the last five wore blue-green jackets and were buried in wooden coffins. One coffin contained an opium pipe and a small ceramic vessel. *[R] mysteriousuniverse.org, 26 Aug 2017.*

TOAD SNACKS

A 4,000-year-old Canaanite tomb from the Middle Bronze Age excavated in Jerusalem's Manahat neighbourhood was found to contain a jar of headless toads as a snack for

its occupant on their way to the afterlife. The toads are thought to have been a normal part of people's diets, but the find itself is rare. The animals were decapitated, possibly to help remove their toxic skin. "Finding toads is pretty unusual," said dig co-director Shua Kisilevitz. "To the best of my knowledge, the only other place in Israel with a toad find was in Wadi Ara, and dates to the Late Bronze Age. We understand that this was part of the food consumed while still alive." *D.Mail (online), 26 Sept 2017.*



CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

219: PITHY PYTHIA

"I am Woman – Hear Me Roar..."

Oh, I am wise,

But it's wisdom born of pain" – Helen Reddy

Greek and Roman women were second-class citizens in too many ways, albeit not so oppressed as alleged by such feminists as Sara Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Witches, Whores, and Slaves* (1975). Where they did take centre stage was religion.

Priestesses dominated in many cults across the classical world. In some cases, from Babylon (Herodotus, bk1) to Aphrodite Pandemos, there were associations with temple prostitution. Great fun must have been had at the orgies dedicated to Thracian Cotytto, Goddess of Lewdness – Priapus's geographic and theological oppo. As also – compared to their modern counterparts – at the Roman Floralia (April 27) where tarts, according to the shocked Christian historian Lactantius (*Divine Institutes*, bk20 ch6), "in addition to their obscene talk, stripped naked and performed until they brought the shameless spectators to full climax with their wiggling buttocks" – Now if only all religions were like that...

Special kudos to Athenian Theano, the only sacerdotal to refuse to excommunicate the exiled rogue politician Alcibiades (Plutarch, ch22 para4), retorting that she was a priestess for praying, not cursing.

Innumerable ancient sources. Anecdotes in Herodotus, Plutarch's *Essays*, especially 'On the Decline of Oracles', and Pausanias's *Description of Greece* are the best. There are – predictably – many books on the subject, the latest of which is Michael Scott's *Delphi: a History of the Centre of the Ancient World* (2014); cf. Peter Green's top-notch assessment, *London Review of Books*, 3 July, 2014, 7-9.

The Pythia was Apollo's spokeswoman. Her brand name is unattractive, deriving from the Greek verb *puthein* (to rot), referring to the decomposed monster snake slain by the god. Equally offputting is this account (in a letter) by Kingsley Amis on modern Delphi: "The whole thing is a heap of rubble. And a sort of holy stream which a lot of people ceremonially drank from – not I, deeming the content of goat turds, peasants' piss, etc. to be too high for comfort."

According to historian Diodorus Siculus (bk16 ch26 paras1-4), the Oracle had an appropriately miraculous beginning.



Coretas, a goatherd, observed that one of his animals that had fallen into the chasm was behaving oddly. On going down to investigate, he was suddenly possessed with the gift of prophecy, as were the locals he reported this to. A shrine was quickly set up and Delphi was in business.

"If a man can go drunk on God, he may usefully pass along his exhilarations to other manifestations of godness" – Fort, *Books*, p655. Pausanias (bk9 ch30 para10) reports the cognate tale of a shepherd who fell asleep on Orpheus's tomb and started to sing "beautiful songs" in his slumber – wonder if Adele had a similar kick-start?

As Scott and others have asked, "Why was it that sane rational Greeks wanted to hear the rantings of an old woman up in the hills?" We tend to think of the Pythia as an old crone, similar to the OT's Witch of Endor or the Scottish Play's trio of hags – did they prophesy the great 2014 Referendum and its outcome, squatting in a cauldron over a tripod? How uncomfortable was that, inhaling noxious fumes, her babblings having to be interpreted and written down in prose or verse by attendant priests?

In fact, the first Pythia was a young girl, and over the centuries was variously a sophisticated upper-class dame or coarse-featured illiterate peasant. Old crones were preferred after a customer, Echecrates the Thessalian, fell in lust with the (then) young virginal Pythia and raped her.

Apart from many social and financial privileges, the Pythia's job resembled a Zero Hours contract, being available only

once a month, closed for the winter while Apollo the boss was away on holiday. But over the centuries, she got through a lot of customers. Around 500 responses were anciently recorded; there's an on-line list of them. When she was off-duty, visitors had to make do with the resident priests who either doled out hexameter verse advice or replied to Yes-No queries with tossing over an appropriately coloured bean.

Modern rationalising discussion has centred on the vapours. Ethylene gas is a favourite explanation of many, including Green: once modernly used as an anaesthetic, it can induce a trance-like state, also emitting the sweet odour reported by Plutarch, himself a long-serving Delphic priest. Dissenters claim ethylene is impossible, instead plumping for methane, CO₂ or H₂S (see **FT127:21**).

Delphi was exempt from the jokes of Aristophanes and others about corrupt venal oracles. Only one attempt to bribe it (by Spartan king Cleomenes) is reported, though since all well-heeled clients brought lavish palm-greasing presents, was there a difference between offering and bung?

Delphic responses were notoriously ambiguous – Apollo was known as Loxias ('The Riddler' – not Batman's enemy) – carefully phrased to ensure an image of infallibility. The most famous example was the reply given to King Croesus (whose gifts had been – so Herodotus – outstandingly lavish) who asked what would happen if he crossed the river Halys. Reply: If King Croesus crosses the river Halys, he will destroy a mighty empire. The emboldened king did so, was militarily wiped out, and when he returned to complain, was told the fated empire was his own – clear case of Halys in Wonderland.

Thanks to patronage from Romans, who had no comparable oracles, Delphi had a long run, finally silenced by Christian pressure and legislation, either (suitably) in the reign of Julian the last pagan emperor or the repressive Theodosius I, who banned the Olympic Games. But, as a future Classical Corner will show, the Romans had their own female religious superstars...

"I took my troubles down to Madam Rue,

You know the gypsy with the gold-capped tooth" – Love Potion Number 9.



STRANGE CONTINENT

Unfazed by Brexit, **ULRICH MAGIN** and **THEO PAIJMANS** round up the weirdest news from across Europe...

OUT OF PLACE

This April, a Frisian couple out for a stroll near the town of Putten, in the wooded Veluwe area of Gelderland, got the fright of their lives when they spotted an animal they could not identify crossing the path some distance in front of them. They described it as being the size of a large dog or boar, but with a long tail and moving stealthily, in a “catlike” manner. The woman, who was badly frightened, later said she thought that they had seen “a small black panther”. The couple managed to capture the animal on photo. In 2005, various people claimed to have spotted an animal resembling a large puma in the Veluwe. *Omroep Gelderland, 15 Apr 2017.*

In June, and continuing well into July, a panther was seen between Nasciano and San Pellegrino in Umbria, Italy. The first clipping in our possession says that on 16 June a night watchman saw the animal “in the same general area” as in previous encounters.

By the end of June, there were over 40 credible witnesses at Gualdo Tadino for what the press called a large cat, presumably a panther. Traps had been set but remained empty. On the night of 28 June, some boys took a video of the dark or black animal (the usual ‘blob’) moving in a field of wheat near the local cemetery. The following day, however, several locals investigated and found “traces of a wild boar... so the animal seen last night was not the panther!”

On 3 July, there were three more sightings. First, a group of young people went into the field where the video had been taken, and found the ‘blob’ that had been filmed to be larger than a life-sized panther toy they brought with them for comparison. Two additional sightings followed overnight, made by a whole family and



ABOVE: Lake Trerich, which some locals now think is home to a monster. ABOVE: Giuliano's mystery creature – any ideas?

ULRICH MAGIN

two boys. A new video was also shot, of a black ‘spot’ (a sitting panther?) in a ripe wheat field. Meanwhile, a local resident claimed that the big cat filmed was actually his own domestic moggy. *Perugia Today, 16+29 June, 3 July 2017.*

While the wave in Perugia was still going on, one ‘Giuliano’ took a picture of a strange creature near a roundabout at Brescia. The picture shows... a hedgehog... a skunk... a porcupine? The guardsman could only guess, and so could the newspaper he sent his picture to. The image shows a small quadruped animal with extra-long spikes on the back which are bent towards the head. *Brescia Oggi, 20 June 2017.*

And on 11 August 2017, a pure white wallaby was photographed and videotaped with a cell phone in the garden of the Wagner family in Bergisch Gladbach, Germany. While the mystery albino certainly paid the Wagners a visit, no wallaby was missing from either a zoo or a private collection. *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, 12 Aug 2017.*

LAKE MONSTERS

According to a travel report by Peggy Lohse, published on the German-language webpage *Russia Beyond the Headlines* on 15 July 2017, there is a monster in Lake Udbisch, near Toropez, a small town of 15,000 inhabitants on the border with Belarus. There are 300 lakes in the region, but the 20m- (66ft) deep Lake Udbisch is the only one with a monster. People claim to have seen a giant “Loch Ness monster” in it, very much like a dinosaur, and have also caught flying fish in the lake. The piece adds that the lake is a favourite picnic spot, and lots of alcohol is consumed there...

Meanwhile, something was dragging ducklings underwater in Lake Trerich near Siegburg, Germany. “The water welled up, and the ducklings were gone!” reported Ralf Beyer, head of Siegburg’s parks and gardens department. Walkers saw a “reptile” approach a group of ducks, which flew away panicked, and were able to snap a picture of a large v-wake on the water. “The animal in the

image cannot be identified on”, said Beyer. He thought the wake might have been caused by a muskrat, a pike or a catfish, but ruled out a reptile. “We do not think we have Nessie here,” he said, and announced closer controls of the lake. When Ulrich Magin visited the lake a few days later, he saw a population of cormorants, which can leave wakes in the water, as well as a coot that dived and did not reappear.

Early in August, Beyer declared he was now sure it was a large catfish which would do no further harm as the young ducks were now too large to offer a quick snack. However, there seem to have been no further sightings. Lake Trerich was excavated in the 16th century, and is only 10ft (3m) deep with a surface of 10 acres (4ha). *Rhein-Sieg-Anzeiger, 25 July + 4 August; General-Anzeiger, Express, 26 July 2017.*

UFOs AND IFOS

On Sunday 28 May, Rik Koops and Harm Duursma saw a UFO over Park Sonsbeek in Arnhem, the Netherlands.



Koops shot a three-minute video of three globular objects. A spokesperson for the Defence Helicopter Command, stationed at nearby Deelen airport, denied that the objects were drones being used in a drill at the airport ("This was not military gear. Besides, the observation was made on Sunday evening and we don't practise then") and suggested the UFO was probably a helium balloon. *De Gelderlander*, 30 May + 7 June 2017.

A UFO danced through the sky over Hamm in Westphalia, Germany, for 15 minutes on 16 June. Spotted at 6.05pm, the 'thing' moved like a snake. Karin Riemann was able to film 57 seconds of this odd behaviour; from this video, as well as from several photographs, the UFO was shown to be a piece of windborne fabric. *Westfälischer Anzeiger*, 21 June 2017.

Meanwhile, "strange lights" appeared over Graz in Austria on 30 June. Video posted to YouTube shows two UFOs with two lights apiece. As a local newspaper pointed out, the "UFOs" were actually gliders of the Blanix-Team, a group of pilots from Aigen in the Enns valley who are known for their daring performances. *Kleine Zeitung [Graz]*, 5 July 2017.

Many people observed strange lights at Montichiari, Brescia, Italy, in July 2017. The lights were actually balloons with LED lights inside released by newlyweds Elisa Stocchetti and Francesco Stucchi. "We did not imagine it would cause such a stir", said the happy bride. *Giornale di Brescia*, 30 July 2017.

HOLE IN THE SKY

On the morning of 9 August, a large circular hole appeared in the clouds above southern Finland, where it was observed by many in Helsinki and soon made the rounds on social media. Meteorologist Seija Paasonen explained it was a rare, though not an unconventional sight – a fallstreak hole, or holepunch cloud, which can be caused by

aeroplanes. "When the air is disturbed by some stimulus, water droplets can evaporate and create a gap in the cloud." *Ilta-lehti*, 9 Aug 2017.

When Finnish ufologist Björn Borg posted a picture on the EURO-UFO list, Belgian Wim van Utrecht pointed out the same phenomenon had just been seen from various places around Brussels, making headlines in the country. Frank Deboosere had seen holes over Vilvoorde and sent his photos via Twitter, while other observers were in Herentals, Haacht, Wilrijk and Elewijt. *de redactie.be*, 9 Aug 2017.

MYSTERY HUM

A mysterious humming sound has been keeping the inhabitants of the western part of the Dutch province of Friesland awake at night. The sound, described as "chilling to the very bone", was first heard in the town of Hoorn in the west of the province. Subsequently, residents from further afield began to complain, with villagers from Grootebroek and Andijk reporting the same spooky noise. Speculation that the sound was somehow connected to road construction failed to explain why it is also heard in places some distance away from any works. "Some inhabitants hear the same as we do. But others do not. A strange situation", remarked Mrs Debby Hillebrand from the village of Andijk. *De Telegraaf*, 8 Aug 2017.

SEEING THE LIGHT

Thousands of Russian viewers spotted an enormous globe of light over northern Siberia. It grew in size before suddenly vanishing and terrified the locals, according to local media. Russian photographer Sergey Anisimov, who managed to take a picture of the strange light, stated: "The globe ascended from behind the trees and travelled in my direction. At first, I thought it was a searchlight, but then it changed into a bow shape and immediately vanished after



ABOVE: A rare fallstreak hole in the sky above Helsinki.

that." Nuclear tests were held on the same night according to the Russian Ministry of Defence, and the light globe may have been the trail of an intercontinental missile launched by the Russian military. *Algemeen Dagblad*, 27 Oct 2017.

CLOWN CAPERS

Two 'killer clowns' were arrested by police in the Dutch town of Hulst, Zeeland, on Sunday 24 September after they had terrorised and chased some seven-year-old children. The 'clowns' turned out to be two teenage boys, aged 13 and 14. They were reprimanded by police and then sent home.

The week before, some teenage girls in a school playground in the village of Heikant were frightened by a clown wearing an orange wig and fake blood on its face and armed with balloons and a shovel. Local police swiftly arrived with two police cars and searched the area, but could not find the culprit. "The girls knew that it was fake, but were still very frightened", said a police spokesperson. *PCZ.nl*, 20 + 25 Sept 2017.

GHOSTLY GOINGS-ON

Janny (63) and William Janssen (68) from the Dutch village of Balkbrug, Overijssel, are quite used to the ghostly goings-on in the former rectory that

is their home. According to them, their children often see "people dressed in old-fashioned clothes" through the windows, inexplicable noises emanate from the attic and the sound of horses' hooves is sometimes heard in the living room. One of their neighbours has refused to visit the house since she saw the "ghost of a child" standing under a tree in the garden. Another neighbour, who kept an eye on the house while the Janssens were away, ended up with a broken arm. She felt a sudden gust of wind and was certain that she had been pushed, although no one was there.

According to a paranormal researcher who examined the house, an old woman who had hanged herself in the attic is the cause of all the mischief, and the family claim that during renovations they found a rusty hook with the remnants of a worn rope dangling from it. William, who is a local historian, has failed to find any records to substantiate the researcher's suicide claim. However, Janny adds: "Some time ago something was found in the local archive. A housekeeper of a pastor was buried in unconsecrated ground – and unconsecrated ground usually points to a suicide." *PCZ.nl*, 27 October 2017.



AN EAR FOR MUSIC

Musical hallucinations can range from patriotic choirs and military bands to torture by country and western songs...

IAN GAVAN / GETTY IMAGES

• Since last July, Ron Goldspink, 87, a former merchant seaman from Bilton, East Yorkshire, has heard a 49-second loop of 'God Save the Queen' sung by a male choir continuously in his head, and says it is driving him mad. "Sometimes it is really loud and deafening, but other times it is quiet," he said. "It hurts just to think. I've never heard a male choir sing before, let alone heard them sing the national anthem. The choir are really good singers, but I just don't want to hear it any more." At the time of the news report, he hoped to meet the Queen when she visited Hull on 16 November, to tell her he has heard the national anthem even more times than she has.

Musical ear syndrome is a form of tinnitus where people who have hearing loss develop musical hallucinations. It affects about one in 10,000 people aged over 65 in the UK. "It is mostly an orchestra or choir that you hear, but can be nursery rhymes or songs from rock bands," said David Stockdale, chief executive of the British Tinnitus Association. "God Save the Queen is a first." However, readers might recall that in 2013 Susan Root also heard the national anthem in her head, but mainly (poor woman) *How Much is that Doggie in the Window?* [FT300:24]

"I complained about my next door neighbour who I thought was playing music and keeping me awake at night," said Mr Goldspink. "My son complained to the council and when they came down I told them I could hear this music coming from through the wall every night. They went next door and my neighbour said they were not playing anything, and I realised it was just me that could hear it... There is nothing you can do about it – the only possible way I can get a rest from it is if I put a hearing aid in one ear and have the TV on in the background." *D.Mail, Times, D.Mirror, 2 Nov 2017.*

• Another sufferer of musical ear syndrome is the comedian



"It varies quite a bit, but nearly every day it involves a bagpipe solo"

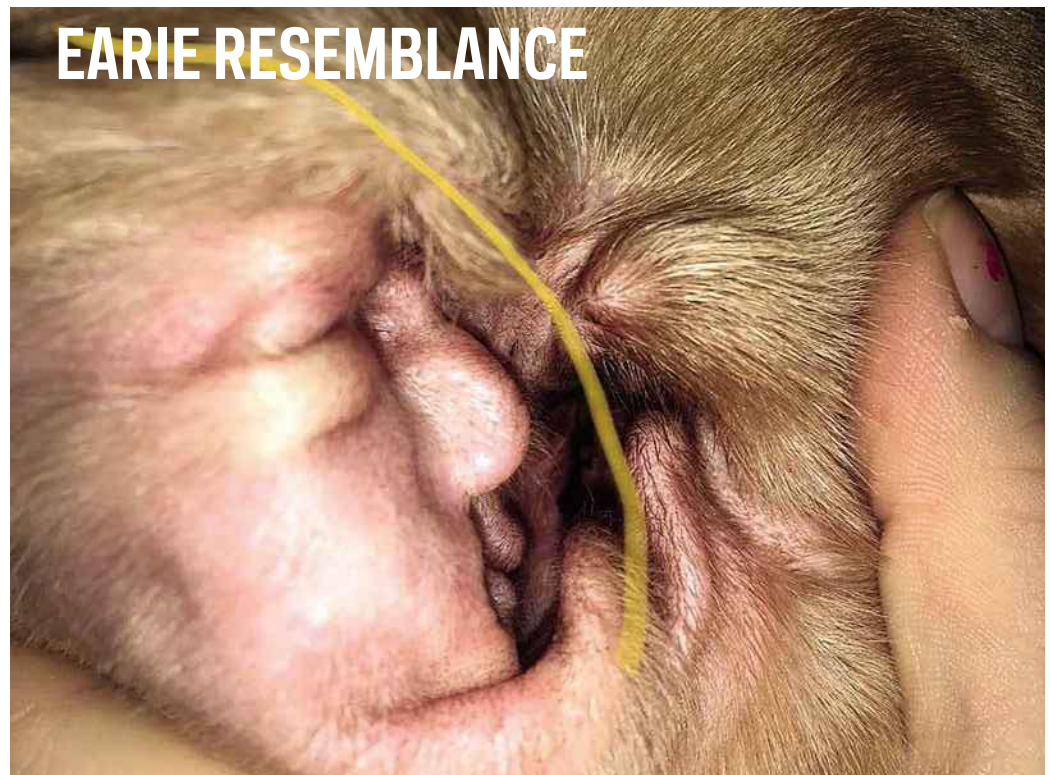
and wildlife TV presenter Bill Oddie, 76 (pictured at left), whose earworm (a calque from the German *Ohrwurm*) started at roughly the same time as that of Mr Goldspink, and consists largely of jumbled brass band tunes. "There is no pattern to when or where it starts," he said. "It is a military-style band of the 1940s but not as nice as a Glenn Miller swing band. It varies quite a bit and it is difficult to distinguish a tune, but nearly every day it involves a bagpipe solo."

He first noticed the sounds while working in the office in his London home. "I thought someone had left the radio on so I followed the noise but it was coming with me, which was weird." *Sunday Express, 22 Oct; D.Mail, 23 Oct 2017.*

• Retired fireman Glenn Mitchell, 53, from Northampton,

heard endless country and western songs playing in his head. He was also left with an array of painful sounds in his ear including ringing, grinding, buzzing and whistling, which meant that noises such as a boiling kettle and his wife's breathing were too much to bear. "It all started when my husband Glenn and I went to our local pub to watch a live band," his widow Linda told the British Tinnitus Association. "They played modern rock music like the Jam, that sort of thing, but they were very loud to the point where we just walked out. What followed was heartbreaking."

Mitchell told his wife: "If I am going to suffer from this, at least let me hear some decent rock and roll music." After enduring the cacophony for 12 weeks, he took a fatal overdose of painkillers four years ago. *Times, 16 Oct 2017.*



The virtual community was entertained recently when a photograph of the inside of a dog's ear resembling President Trump was posted on Facebook. The dog in question is a two-year-old beagle named Chief belonging to Jade Robinson, 25, from Tyne and Wear. *D.Mail, D.Mirror, 5 Nov 2017.*



KARL SHUKER welcomes two newly described species that have been hiding in plain sight



LEFT: The Tapanuli orangutan: a single, tiny population lives in Sumatra's Batang Toru forest. ABOVE: *Naja peroescobari*.

This month's column is devoted to two remarkable newly described species – made even more remarkable by the extraordinary fact that they have both been hidden in plain sight for decades (centuries in the case of the second example).

A SEVENTH GREAT APE

Until very recently, zoologists recognised six species of great ape – two gorillas (eastern and western), two chimpanzees (common and pygmy), and two orangutans (Sumatran and Bornean). In November 2017, however, accompanied by much media fanfare, an international research team including eminent mammalogist Prof Colin Groves and anthropologist Dr Erik Meijaard formally announced in the journal *Current Biology* the existence of a seventh – the Tapanuli orangutan, which has been officially dubbed *Pongo tapanuliensis*. It consists of a single tiny but discrete population in the Batang Toru forest of Sumatra, first recorded as far back as the 1930s, finally attracting scientific attention in 1997, and the subject of continued study ever since.

This large Indonesian island was already known to harbour the Sumatran orangutan *Pongo abelii*, but that species exists further to the northwest. Also, the Tapanuli orangutan can be outwardly distinguished from the Sumatran by virtue of several readily visible morphological characteristics, including its proportionately smaller head, flatter face, pronounced moustache, and frizzier fur. Its males' call is recognisably different too, and even its diet is unique, by including more unusual items in it, such as caterpillars and conifer cones.

Moreover, genetic comparisons conducted on tissue samples taken from

an adult male specimen killed by locals in 2013 have suggested that this newly delineated species is, ironically, the closest to the basic founder orangutan stock, and is the stock from which both the Sumatran species and later the Bornean species subsequently separated. Tragically, however, with no more than 800 individuals believed to exist, in a total area of no more than 1,000 km² (386 sq miles), the Tapanuli orangutan also claims the unenviable status as the world's rarest great ape and is currently categorised as Critically Endangered.

Current Biology [www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(17\)31245-9](http://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(17)31245-9); *Nature*, www.nature.com/news/newly-discovered-orangutan-species-is-also-the-most-endangered-1.22934; *BBC News* www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-41848816 – all 2 Nov 2017.

RETURN OF THE NATIVE

Herpetologists have long known that a very sizeable form of black-scaled cobra exists on the small West African island of São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea, but both they and the island's inhabitants (who refer to it as the cobra-preta) have traditionally believed it to be nothing more than the 3m (10ft)-long forest cobra *Naja melanoleuca* native to the African mainland nearby that had presumably been introduced in modern times onto São Tomé in order to combat its burgeoning rat population. Hence it had never attracted any taxonomic attention. Fortunately, however, one researcher, Dr Luis M Ceriaco of Villanova University in Pennsylvania, USA, was not convinced by this explanation, and became particularly curious after some investigations on his part revealed that such snakes had actually existed on São Tomé as far back

as the early 16th century, as specifically documented in a report prepared in 1540 by a Portuguese explorer who had visited the island in 1506.

Moreover, when Ceriaco observed specimens of São Tomé's enigmatic cobra-preta, he discovered that they were even longer than the mainland forest cobra and their scales were less white. Consequently, he decided to solve the matter by conducting genetic comparisons between the São Tomé cobra-preta and the mainland forest cobra, which duly revealed that the two snakes were indeed markedly different from one another taxonomically, sufficiently discrete in fact to warrant the island form being classified as a separate species in its own right. In 2017, Ceriaco and three fellow co-researchers formally described this very visible yet long unrecognised serpentine species in the journal *Zootaxa*, and they officially dubbed it *Naja peroescobari*, in honour of the 15th century Portuguese explorer Pero Escobar – one of three explorers who discovered São Tomé in 1471. Ironically, the cobra-preta had been in danger of being exterminated as a troublesome invasive species due to its venomous bite, but now that it has been shown to be a native species on São Tomé found nowhere else, there are hopes that it will receive official protection and the locals will be educated in its zoological significance, so as to be more tolerant of its presence and, equally, less ready to put themselves in situations that may lead to their being bitten.

<https://biotaxa.org/Zootaxa/article/view/zootaxa.4324.1.7>; <http://novataxa.blogspot.co.uk/2017/09/naja-peroescobari.html>; www.reptilesmagazine.com/New-Species-Of-Cobra-Discovered-On-Sao-Tom-Island-In-The-Gulf-Of-Guinea/.



FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS | Slender Man killers spared prison, London's Satanic panic and Kashmir's braid-chopping attacks

SLENDER MAN [FT316:4]



In order to curry favour with an imaginary horror personage called Slender Man, Morgan Geyser (below) and Anissa Weier (at bottom), two girls from Waukesha, Wisconsin, lured Payton Leutner – who also attended Horning Middle School in the Milwaukee suburb – into woods where Geyser stabbed her 19 times while Weier urged her on. Leutner survived the 2014 attack by crawling out of the woods, where she was found by a passing cyclist. All three girls were 12 at the time. Weier and Geyser told detectives they felt they had to kill Leutner to become Slender Man's “proxies”, or servants, and protect their families from him.

Geyser and Weier were charged with attempted first-degree intentional homicide, which carries a possible sentence of up to 65 years in prison. However, Geyser, now 15, has been sentenced to 40 years in a mental hospital. Geyser's attorneys argued that she suffers from schizophrenia and psychotic spectrum disorder, making her prone to delusions and paranoid beliefs. A psychiatrist previously testified

that she believed she could communicate telepathically with Slender Man and could see and hear other fictional characters, including unicorns and characters from the Harry Potter and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles series. She also believed she had “Vulcan mind control”. Meanwhile, Weier faces at least three years in a mental hospital when she is sentenced later. She said that she didn't want to harm Leutner and that the stabbing plot was Geyser's idea. She said she participated because she was afraid of what would happen if she didn't. “I believed that if I didn't go through with it, Slender Man would come and attack and kill myself, my friends and my family – those I cared about the most,” she said.

Slender Man was created during an on-line photo-editing contest in 2009 as a mysterious spectre whose image people edit into everyday scenes of children at play. He is typically depicted as a spidery figure in a black suit with a featureless white face. He is regarded by his devotees as alternately a sinister force and an avenging angel [see also FT305:55, 317:30-37]. [AP] 1+5 Oct 2017.

THE HAMPSTEAD WITCH HUNT [FT327:26-27]



In March 2015, we reported on the disturbing case of satanic ritual abuse hysteria in Hampstead, north London. In a custody dispute with her ex-partner, a Russian yoga teacher called Ella Draper tortured and brainwashed her two young children to go online and expose an imaginary satanic cult run by their father. They talked of scores of drugged babies being sent by courier services such as TNT and DHL to London from abroad to be sacrificed. Cult members drank their victims' blood and danced around with the babies' skulls. The owner of a local shoe repair shop supposedly used babies' skin to make special shoes.

The short clip was one of 16 posted online. At least seven schools were named, a swimming pool identified as a meeting place and ‘rituals’ were alleged to have been performed at a McDonald's restaurant. In some clips, Draper identifies other members of the 100-strong satanic ring. She said the headmistress of Christ Church Primary School in Hampstead, which her children attended, “runs lucrative child pornography and a snuff movies business”, and was in league with another teacher, the local priest and dozens of local parents including company directors, advertising executives, small business owners, social workers, and a national TV reporter. Phone numbers, postal and email addresses were published next to their names, leading to horrendous harassment by people under Draper's spell.

The claims are familiar from the litany of grotesque and preposterous accusations made by evangelical social workers and therapists against dozens of blameless adults from 1987 to the early 1990s [see FT57:46-62] – accusations comprehensively rubbishised by Prof Jean La Fontaine in *Speak of the Devil* (1998). The irony now evident is that while these accusations were baseless, priests, politicians and show-biz personalities were busy sexually abusing children. Even though a High Court judge, Mrs Justice Pauffley, said two years ago that Draper was “evil” and all her allegations “utter nonsense”, her poisonous fantasies and accusations of a nationwide cover-up by the police and judiciary can still be found online.

While Draper fled abroad and is still at large, an American blogger, Rupert Wilson Quaintance, 38, has now been jailed for harassing four mothers and a father of pupils at Christ Church Primary School, named by Draper. He was arrested in south-east London in September 2016 after travelling from his home in Charlottesville, Virginia,

to carry out his campaign outside the school. He was charged with putting people in fear of violence and was sentenced in Southwark Crown Court on 30 August 2017 to nine months in jail, and also banned from posting anything about the false allegations online. “This conviction is only the first step,” said Belsize Park councillor Leila Roy. “Hopefully, everyone who has been harassing the families will be silenced now.” *Hampstead & Highgate Express* (north London), 7 Sept 2017.

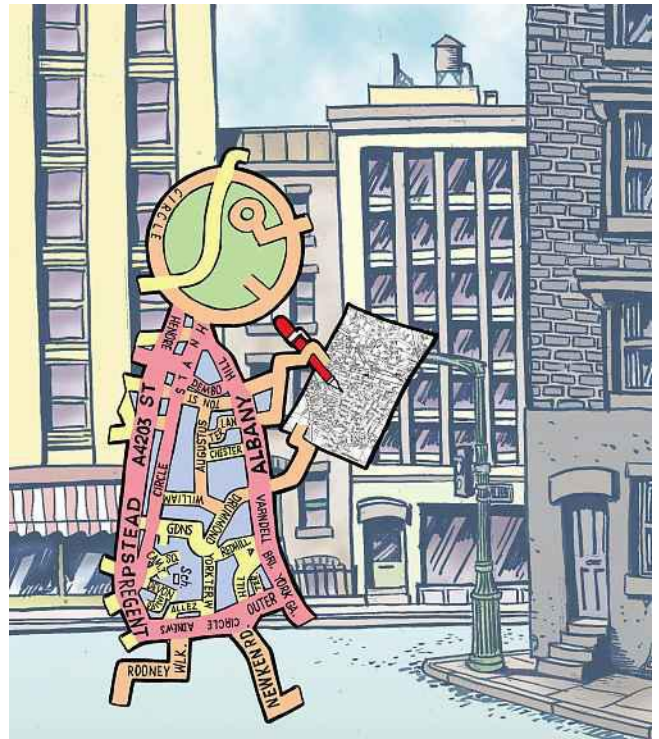
PHANTOM BARBERS [FT358:6-7]



Shaqeela Sajad was sweeping the front porch one day in early October when a masked man dressed in black forced a handkerchief over her nose and attacked her. “When I opened my eyes in the hospital, I found my braid had been hacked,” said Sajad, 24, who is pregnant with her first child, from her home in Srinagar in India-administered Kashmir. Tasleema Rouf, 35, was on the top storey of her house in Srinagar when she saw a man's shadow. Before she could react, she was attacked. When she tried to scream for help, he tried to strangle her and she fell unconscious. Her husband found her lying on the floor, with some of her hair chopped off. Since about 6 September, the braid-choppers have been spreading fear in Kashmir's hamlets and towns. Most women here have braided hair under their head coverings, so all are potential victims. This is a highly conservative, Muslim-majority region, where women view cutting their hair or displaying it publicly as dishonourable. In the six weeks up to 17 October, more than 200 braid-chopping incidents were reported to the local police. The attackers were allegedly storming homes or taking down lone women in markets and alleys before cutting their hair, with the tied bundle of hair usually



219: A-Z THE HARD WAY



The myth

The London A-Z book of maps came about when its sole inventor, artist Phyllis Pearsall (1906-96), got lost on her way to a party in Belgravia, one night in 1935. Frustrated by the inadequacy of existing street maps, she immediately set about creating something entirely new: an indexed atlas of London. She mapped the capital by spending the next year getting up at 5am, walking for 18 hours every day, along every one of the capital's 23,000 streets - a total of 3,000 miles (4,828km).

The "truth"

You'll find this romantic story repeated widely, in what are frankly cut-and-paste versions, unbecoming to the reputations of the sources that carry them. But historians of cartography find it a ludicrous tale, pointing out that Pearsall had no need to walk any further than to borough council offices, where street plans of each area were available. Besides which, street-indexed maps of London had been produced long before the A-Z, most recently by Pearsall's own father.

Sources

<https://greatwen.com/2010/10/25/urban-legends-phyllis-pearsall-and-the-a-z/>; www.mheap.com/three_myths.html; www.untoldsixties.net/musical.htm#top; www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/10660172/Who-was-the-woman-who-invented-the-London-A-Z.html; www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-26288619

Disclaimer

Anyone who's ever visited London will agree that the A-Z was a life-enhancing invention; and Pearsall herself is revered as an ethical and pioneering businesswoman. But even her strongest supporters concede that she was given to improving on the truth. If you have further details to add, turn right at the bottom of the page and keep going until you reach the letters column.



TAUSEEF MUSTARA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Tasleema, the victim of a 'braid-chopping' attack in the Batamaloo area of Srinagar in October 2017.

left at the scene. Some victims said their attackers wore masks; none of them saw them clearly enough to recognise again.

The situation was so volatile that even schools and colleges were shut briefly. The regional government announced a bounty of £6,860 for information on the braid-choppers. However, the police are not generally trusted, and some women refused to cooperate after hearing that other victims who reported their attacks were simply told they were hallucinating. Some women tried to avoid being alone or going out, or were leaving to stay with relatives. "I've not been able to sleep properly since the attack," said Nazia Ibrahim, 28, who was attacked on 4 October at her home in Srinagar and then left to stay with relatives. "I don't want to be attacked again."

The braid attacks have raised concerns that they are related to rebels who since 1989 have been fighting Indian troops for independence or a merger with neighbouring Pakistan. Some pro-independence leaders accuse the Indian government of orchestrating the braid-chopping to divert attention from the resistance. They say the attacks recall assaults by masked men in the 1990s against residents providing shelter to the rebels. "When it comes to rebels involved in covert attacks, the state is full of information. But when it comes to the brazen crimes like this, the state feigns ignorance," said Yasin Malik, a rebel leader. To fight back, vigilantes have hit the streets, sometimes attacking innocent residents mistaken

as braid-choppers. Six tourists – three Australians and one each from South Korea, Ireland and England – were rescued from a vigilante mob. Waseem Ahmad was brutally beaten by a vigilante mob in north Kashmir because he was suspected of being a braid chopper. His attackers tried to burn him alive but he was rescued by the police. The elderly man installed a CCTV camera in his home after his daughter-in-law's hair was chopped off on two occasions over three days.

"Anger is leading to anarchy," said Junaid Rather, 27, a local journalist who saw an intruder on 13 October in the garden of his house in Srinagar. "I thought, 'It's a dog'," he recalled. "When I challenged it, I saw a man in black attire climbing our 13ft [4m] corrugated sheet wall in a blink. Only a trained person can escape like this." Sabina Aijaz, 35, was attacked twice. Aijaz was in the kitchen when someone knocked and said "Open the door" in a foreign accent. "But when she tried to look through the iron-grilled window, they sprayed her," said her husband Aijaz Ahmad Dar. "I was upstairs and when I came downstairs, I saw her lying on the floor unconscious." The next morning, two masked men struck again when her husband went out to buy bread. They forced a handkerchief over her face and said, "You annoyed us a lot," before kicking her down the stairs and cutting her braid. "She is in shock," her husband said. *Rouf Bhat, 11 Oct; USA Today, 17 Oct; BBC News, 1 Nov 2017.*

NECROLOG

This time, we note the passings of a Wiccan high priest who took the faith to the USA, the creator of 'primal scream' therapy, and a maverick *Titanic* researcher



RAYMOND BUCKLAND

According to his written works, primarily *Witchcraft from the Inside* (1971), Buckland was the first person in the United States to openly admit to being a practitioner of Wicca. His father Stanley was said to have been a full-blood Romany Gypsy, although the family was nominally Anglican. In 1963 Buckland and his first wife Rosemary were initiated into the Craft in Scotland as 'Robat' and 'Lady Rowen' by Monique Wilson, aka 'Lady Olwen', high priestess of a strand of witchcraft in the Gardnerian tradition. This had been founded by Gerald Gardner (1884-1964), a British civil servant who, under the Craft name Scire, had taken advantage of the 1951 repeal of the Witchcraft Act 1736 (replaced by the Fraudulent Mediums Act) to revive the ancient neo-pagan religion of Wicca, supplementing it with ideas borrowed from Freemasonry, ceremonial magic and the writings of Aleister Crowley.

The Bucklands emigrated to the US, and in 1964, as high priest and high priestess, Robat and Lady Rowen founded their own coven, known as the New

York Coven and located in Bay Shore, Long Island, which set to work to spread the Gardnerian tradition across America, spawning many other covens. Other traditions began to appear with their own varying styles of practice, and in the early 1970s, after the breakdown

of his marriage to Rosemary, Buckland, too, began to feel that the Gardnerian tradition, with its oaths of secrecy and its three grades of initiation, no longer met his religious needs. Too many coven members, he felt, were on power trips.

Instead he founded a new strand called 'Seax-Wica', which he claimed was based on more open and democratic Saxon Wicca traditions. In Seax-Wica, covens decided for themselves whether to work skyclad (naked) or robed, and witches can be initiated either by the coven or through private study. Buckland's book, *The Tree, a definitive guide to Seax-Wica*, was published in 1974 and subsequently republished in 2005 as *Buckland's Book of Saxon Witchcraft*.

Buckland served as technical advisor for Orson Welles's *Necromancy* (1972), and took small character roles in various films. After the break-up of his first marriage in the early 1970s, he handed over leadership of the New York coven to Lady Theos and Phoenix (Judy and Tom Kneitel), a couple he would later describe in an interview as having "probably [done] more harm to witchcraft than

the Christian persecutors back in the Middle Ages". He moved, along with the Museum of Witchcraft and Magick he had set up in 1966, to Weirs Beach, New Hampshire, where he married Joan Taylor, subsequently moving to Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he started his Seax-Wica correspondence course that soon grew to over 1,000 students worldwide. His second marriage broke down and in 1983 he married Tara Cochran, ending up on a small farm in Ohio. There, after more than 25 years working with covens, he became a "solitary", developing a practice based on Seax-Wica with elements of Pecti Wita (a Scottish tradition of witchcraft).

Raymond Buckland, Wiccan high priest, born London 31 Aug 1934; died Ohio 27 Sept 2017, aged 83.

ARTHUR JANOV

This Californian psychotherapist, the son of a truck driver, is best known for advocating "primal scream" therapy, which involved revisiting painful aspects of childhood and shouting loudly about them in a bid to eradicate their malign effect upon the personality. He claimed this would spell "the end of mental disease" and was the subject of his first book, *The Primal Scream* (1970) – boldly subtitled "The Cure for Neurosis". The publisher sent a copy to John Lennon in the middle of the Beatles' break-up, and Lennon was taken by a work that chimed with his barely suppressed rage at childhood abandonment by his parents. He and Yoko Ono signs up for sessions with Janov, and the

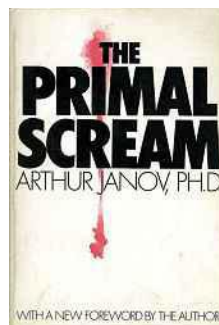
year ended with a solo album whose often-harrowing songs (such as 'Mother') were a result of that self-examination. The English rock group Tears for Fears, founded in 1981, took its name, and the subject matter of many of its songs, in homage to Janov's method.

Janov became a ubiquitous presence on the talk-show circuit and wrote more than a dozen books. He claimed he could cure ailments from depression and alcoholism to ulcers, epilepsy and asthma, not to mention bring about world peace. With his wife Vivian Gluckstein he had set up the Primal Institute, which was continually in search of new premises as business neighbours complained about the terrifying noises coming from the clinic. They eventually fitted out a former club in West Hollywood with a huge room for group sessions – equipped with teddy bears, playpens, dolls, baby rattles and security blankets – and a padded cell. Patients were monitored by two-way mirrors and closed-circuit cameras for the staff of eight therapists. Applicants had to submit an autobiography, and those with a weak heart were not

accepted. In 1980 Janov divorced Vivian, who continued the Institute, and set up another one nearby with his second wife, France Daunic, which attracted business from those drawn to a theory now largely confined to the West Coast of America. He continued to practise up until his death. The

centre currently treats about 40 patients annually.

Arthur Janov, inventor of primal scream therapy, born Los Angeles 21 Aug 1924; died Malibu, California 1 Oct 2017, aged 93.





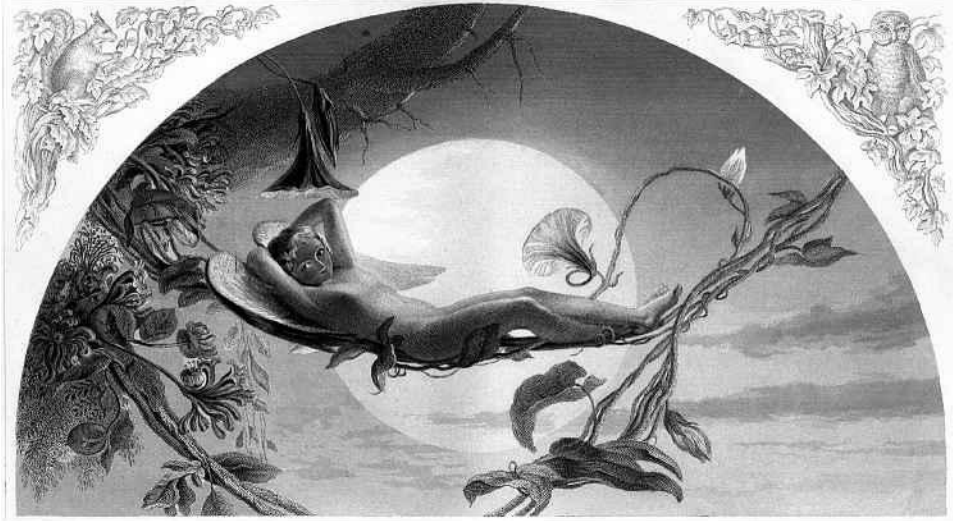
ROBIN GARDINER

Robin Gardiner, a plasterer for more than 20 years, wrote several books claiming the *Titanic* never actually sank in 1912. His meticulous research led him to believe she was switched with her near-identical sister ship the *Olympic* shortly before the maiden voyage as part of an insurance scam. His wife Lynn said not everyone liked his theories, but he “stuck to his guns” and believed in his research and conclusions.

His fascination with the *Titanic* began in his childhood and throughout his life he endeavoured to read everything he could on the ship and its doomed maiden voyage. He concluded that the *Olympic*, which had been involved in a collision in Southampton Water in 1910, was patched up by owners the White Star Line and sailed the *Titanic*’s maiden voyage as the famous ship’s construction had fallen behind schedule. The plan was to then re-instate the *Titanic* as part of its normal service once it was ready – but of course it never completed its first journey. Gardiner even rebutted the notion that the ship hit an iceberg as passengers only described a ‘shudder’.

After Gardiner’s first book on the subject, *The Riddle of the Titanic*, co-authored by maritime specialist Dan van der Vat, was published in 1996, readers around the world sent him more information and evidence supporting his theory, leading to his subsequent books *The Ship that Never Sank* and *The Great Titanic Conspiracy*. He suggested that the *Titanic* went on to serve as a troop ship in World War I and was scrapped before World War II. His books were popular, but sceptics were legion. His agent Graham Smith said that a film project was being developed in the US at the time of his death based on his theories and that it might be produced posthumously.

Robin Gardiner, *Titanic* researcher, born Headington 24 May 1947; died from stomach cancer 23 July 2017, aged 70.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

TAKING THE BOGGART

You are riding along and suddenly your horse bristles or jumps or freezes or, even, in extreme cases, bolts. Why do horses spook in this way?

In periods prior to the motorcar, when horses were a crucial part of farming and getting around, our ancestors scratched their heads. Sometimes, of course, the motive was easily uncovered: cue, wolf or ruffian in the undergrowth. But at other times the reason was less obvious. This was particularly true when local horses repeatedly spooked at the same place. Bridges and junctions were favourites, but not all bridges and junctions. So why did many horses ride happily over, say, that humpback bridge, but got antsy on this brick bridge? It was only natural that supernatural explanations kicked in: after all, there has long been the idea that animals can see things that we cannot (see last issue’s ‘Ghostwatch’; FT360:16-18).

For example, in much of the North of England a spooked horse was said “to take (the) boggart” – in other words to have been frightened by a boggart (a dialect word for a demon or, in some areas, a ghost). Places with a reputation for spooking horses even got called Boggart Bridges, Boggart Lanes and the like. I’ve been reminded about the relationship between animals and the supernatural in recent months as I have accidentally become the owner of a dog.

Molly (for so she is called) accompanies me on my walks and I have been fascinated by the way in which some places clearly make Molly uneasy. When on the lead she tries to stop me advancing, when off the lead she cowers or runs to me. She gets used to these places relatively quickly, but if we take in new countryside, then the cycle begins again. It would be pointless to catalogue, let

alone classify, the places that ‘boggart’ one perhaps eccentric West Highland Terrier who does not count courage among her many virtues. But I don’t particularly like the ‘feel’ of some of these places either. Are there certain features that freak animals out (and that perhaps unnerve us)? One horse expert I talked to, for example, told me that she believed that the bridges that upset horses were often ones with stonework or some form of decoration at the bridge ends. She, likewise, had noticed that

the worst junctions were those where there was a turning between 90 and 270 degrees – in other words turnings going backwards. I, independently, have wondered about places where light suddenly dims: tight ravines, for example. Could we potentially map a landscape in creepiness terms on the basis of Google Maps? Or are other factors like smell or the surface that the animal is walking on also important?

Simon Young’s new book *Magical Folk: British and Irish Fairies: 500 AD to the Present* is out now from Gibson Square Books

PLACES WITH
A REPUTATION
FOR SPOOKING
HORSES GOT
CALLED BOGGART
BRIDGES OR
BOGGART LANES



Keep your hand on your ha'penny

PETER BROOKESMITH surveys the latest fads and flaps from the strange world that is ufology

Remember Blink-182? Nor me neither. A popular singing group of the 1990s, it seems, of an American punk nature, who've sold 50-odd million albums worldwide. Founder and intermittent member of the band Tom DeLonge (right) has launched a corporation to promote radical new technologies, based on UFO-derived technology, and other wondrous stuff besides. The *soi-disant* investigative journalist Leslie Kean, who holds a record for scoring *nul points* for her book in the FT reviews section, breathlessly announced in that unimpeachable journal of record, the *Huffington Post*, that: "Inside knowledge about unidentified aerial phenomena could lead to world-changing technology". Her article went on: "Something extraordinary is about to be revealed. Former high-level officials and scientists with deep black experience who have always remained in the shadows are now stepping into the light. These insiders have long-standing connections to government agencies which may have programs investigating unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP). They intend to move into the private sector and to make all declassified information, and any future knowledge, available for all to see."

Let's look a little closer at this. Starting at the end: this magical new knowledge will come from "*declassified* information", presumably as interpreted and realised by the former "high-level officials and scientists with deep black experience". Surely it is passing strange that no one, even with the blackest of experience, has done this before? And it's not as if no one's made declassified stuff available before: chief suspect being the US Government itself, and they're the ones who're supposed to know.

The "high-level officials and scientists" so far revealed are Chris Mellon, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence; Jim Semivan, formerly of the CIA's Directorate of Operations; Dr Hal Puthoff, sometime Director of DOD/CIA/DIA scientific research programmes; Steve Justice, previously Advanced Systems Director for Lockheed Martin's 'Skunk Works' (think Area 51); and Luis Elizondo, once Director of programmes to investigate unidentified aerial threats, credited only to the US Government, which could mean anything. The impression one's supposed to get, I guess, is that these characters have resigned their prestigious posts to join DeLonge's boldly-going venture. At least one of them, a former Scientologist as it happens, is way past retirement age. What will they, or do they, think of DeLonge's plan



CORY SCHWARTZ / GETTY IMAGES

for his company to build a spaceship that will generate more energy than it consumes? Some of them ought to know that this violates a fundamental law of physics (conservation of energy), although Hal Puthoff, who's been trying to extract energy from a vacuum for decades, may not mind so much.

Such a wheeze shouldn't have come as a surprise to his gang of experts and insiders – if they had read the company prospectus. This announces that its Aerospace Division will "pursue an advanced engineering approach to fundamental aerospace topics ranging from Beamed-Energy Propulsion to warp drive metrics", among other things. Has anyone outside science fiction actually figured out what a warp drive is? The Science Division will pursue "Human Ultra-Experience Database, Engineering Space-Time Metrics, Brain-Computer Interface, and Telepathy..." To some, all this may not seem like o'ervauling ambition, but ought they not to balk at DeLonge's apparent belief that there are pyramids on Mars and that some citizens of Atlantis managed to escape to another planet, whence they returned to Earth to "upgrade us". He expresses admiration for the thoroughly debunked Zacharia Sitchin. He also implied that the iniquitous Grays of ufolore are connected to Atlantis. Evidence for the latter, he maintained in an interview with Joe Rogan, lay in "Greek writing" found on wreckage from the Roswell crash. Unfortunately, the photo he referenced came from the eternally endearing Santilli 'alien autopsy' hoax. In the same interview, Isaac Koi reports: "DeLonge states that 'they' had found a human footprint that is 'like' 100 million years old, which threw everything upside down, that he wouldn't doubt at all that people walked with dinosaurs and

that there have been cycles of civilizations. DeLonge said that people on the inside know this." The inside of what, one is inclined to enquire. A cupboard under the stairs?

If by now you may have the impression that DeLonge is hinged differently from the rest of us, you are doubtless in good company. But his pivot is not entirely detached from a well-seated gatepost of self-interested reality. Looking further into the company prospectus it turns out that he himself is guaranteed \$100,000 a year in royalties for the use of his image and his music (the company also has an Entertainments Division to handle recordings, video, merchandising and books). If actual royalties received fall short of this figure, the company will make up the difference for the next seven years. Nice work if you can get it, not entirely unlike the habit of large corporations paying chief executives seven-figure bonuses even when the company has run at a loss.

I would – perhaps unkindly – characterise DeLonge's enterprise, at this stage of its existence, as a cunning appeal to people's hopes for magical technological achievements (underwritten by some of their more naïve beliefs) as a cover for promoting his own goods. Prediction: if this company lifts off, it will be a vehicle for DeLonge productions, and for endless promises of amazing, always imminent, scientific breakthroughs, which will never quite materialise. You may or may not be astonished to learn that at the time of writing DeLonge had shifted round \$2 million-worth of shares. I wonder if Leslie Kean has bought any of them. As the brokers are obliged to tell you, the value of your investment may reduce as well as increase. *Caveat emptor*, as they didn't say in Atlantis.



Mass market media saucery

JENNY RANGLES argues that the way the media present UFO cases may affect our recall of them

Thirty years ago, I had a surprise. Turning on the TV, I was confronted by myself being portrayed in an advert for a then-new women's magazine, *Bella*. Nobody had told me this was happening, so I just gawped at the screen. The ad resembled a black and white movie about a close encounter, with a deep voice announcing: "Jenny sees the UFOs". This unexpected brush with fame made me feel rather like a UFO witness who has a missing time experience following a close encounter. I wondered what was real and what was made up about the UFO that I had apparently "seen" up there on the TV screen. According to the magazine, my experience on "a deserted Wiltshire road" was "something out of this world" that had even caused me to give up my job and become a full time UFO hunter. Sadly, the truth is slightly less dramatic: I had already published my first UFO book and was about to publish a second, when my "close encounter" occurred on 6 September 1980. Here is how I described it then.

"Paul and I had taken a long, gruelling ride down south from Wallasey on our motorcycle, for the purpose of visiting the Farnborough Air Show. At 9.15pm, returning through the dark on the M4 motorway, we suddenly saw a spectacular aerial display. It consisted of three lights, which burst into existence one after the other, and then lined themselves up into a triangular formation hovering above a distant hilltop. As we drove past one light winked now out leaving two side by side in the night."

The M4 is clearly not quite a "deserted road", although the sighting did unnerve us as we were facing an exhausting round trip of 600 miles in 24 hours (not much fun for me, clinging onto the pillion of a Triumph Bonneville whilst trying to stay awake late at night). Aware of possible explanations for the lights with RAF Lyneham close by, I immediately put the case in the hands of the local UFO team to investigate. Options such as parachute flares and a military transport plane in the gloom were possible solutions, although no definitive answer was found.

Yes, this was one of the more interesting things that I have seen in the sky over the years but neither undoubtedly a UFO nor something that redirected my life. Who knows what I actually said to the magazine to create such an impression? But it brings home the power of words to create a vision of reality in the minds of others.

For me, when doing such interviews, it was mostly about using the opportunity to find other witnesses to come forward and tell

their stories; and in that respect, this was a success, as some 50 cases found their way from all over the UK via *Bella*. Meanwhile another article appeared in *Police Review* – the magazine for coppers – during that same week. It asked patrol officers to report any UFOs they saw on duty to the Aetherius Society. This loosely UFO related Spiritual organisation is still around today; its website bears the heading "Cooperating with the Gods from space", so it might seem an odd choice to direct police officers to instead of, say, a UFO investigation group. I did ask for *Police Review* to provide some balance, and they carried my comment that nine out of 10 UFO cases have mundane explanations and that ufologists would always attempt to identify any sighting made by police. I have no idea how many reports the Aetherius Society got from *Police Review*, but we got 50 less than we did via *Bella* – i.e. none. So, it was a victory for Space Gods over investigators when it came to the boys in blue. Big images and grand ideas just seem to touch the soul of mankind more than a patient search for answers.

That single week from 30 years ago illustrates the process of how a UFO sighting moves from individual observation to public proclamation – but it's not just a thing of the past. In July 2017, hours were wasted by investigators chasing a flap in Cornwall after several clips of a fuzzy, amorphous mass in the sky near Truro and St Austell were 'captured' by selfie-taking surfers or car dash-cams and posted on social media. Cautious analysis of the footage made this 'alien invasion' look pretty dubious. The UFOs seemed suspiciously 'tacked on' to mundane scenes and no witnesses seen in shot appeared to react to what they saw in a way you might expect. This didn't stop the mass media reporting on the 'case', leading to the inevitable interest of UFO investigators. It turned out to be a co-ordinated media hoax: people were encouraged to produce fake footage and add special effects as a way of drawing attention to a new West Country 'Journey into Space' tourist attraction at the popular Eden Project site.

Exciting but fictitious sightings were used by media promoters to manipulate public opinion. But even when events are real they enter public consciousness as a similar edited version: processed first by the witness and their memory and interpretation; then by the investigators, who do interviews and collate information for the record, filtered through their particular take on UFO matters; and potentially, in the end, via a media

source less concerned about data collection than sensation.

All of this happens on the path from observation to publication – and, by the end, many witnesses will not even know themselves how accurate is the account of their experiences that the world gets to see. Witnesses' own perception of an incident may change and adapt through the years, with each new and escalating version adding a new layer to their story.

This makes clear the importance of witnesses documenting their sightings as soon as possible, and investigators doing likewise with the facts they uncover. Who knows which version I would believe about that sighting on a "deserted road in Wiltshire" (the M4!) had I not known the truth.

Dealing with the media is complicated, because we seek hard facts to evaluate but they seek a good story to sell. Nothing shows that better than how in 1947 the Kenneth Arnold sighting kick-started the modern UFO mystery, as documented in the 70th anniversary FT special earlier this year (FT355). Arnold reported the crescent-winged military aircraft he thought he saw moving like a "saucer skipping across water". But his slightly odd words were hijacked by a journalist who saw a headline in calling this a "flying saucer" – a phrase that stuck. What Arnold saw was not saucer-shaped: that image is a consequence of cultural expectation built on his choice of words. We did not get decades of reports of crescent-shaped objects or of UFOs merrily 'skipping' through air like bouncing stones as we might have had those elements been emphasised by the media. The words of this witness and the reality of his sighting counted less in the years that followed than a wonderful motif of a saucer-shaped alien machine culturally implanted to dominate our perception for decades.

What matters most when producing a ripple in the collective unconscious is not the facts of what is seen but the *reporting* of those facts. The bigger the audience, the more powerful the effect – and the more likely it will change our world view without us knowing. Given how insidious mass-market interpretation is today, we should be careful what we say about a UFO sighting: those words outlive our own befuddlement over what we witnessed. And if we ourselves become unsure what we saw, then how can we expect history to judge the nature of a phenomenon moulded not so much by events as by the media expression of those events?

The politics of monsters

Monsters have served variously as projections of our fears, markers of difference, vehicles for ‘othering’ and icons of pop-cultural rebellion. **MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO** surveys the changing meanings and shifting politics of the monstrous from antiquity to late capitalism.

Monsters have always lived with us – at the edge of the ocean, at the heart of the woods, on the covers of newspapers, inside us. But what is a monster? Coming up with a definition is almost impossible: they stand for anything that is hideous, morally objectionable, abnormal, or taboo. Societies create their own concepts of “self” and “other”, and what is seen as “other” often acquires monstrous traits. Analysing a society’s monsters will reveal who the dominant groups are, and who they mark as inferior. A monster is, therefore, more often than not, a political construct.

CLASSICAL MONSTERS

In ancient Greece, there were two types of monsters. The first were mythological creatures who existed in a similar sphere to the Gods, symbols of the forces of nature gone awry, of primordial chaos: Scylla and Charybdis, Cerberus or the Gorgons. The others lived much closer to us. Some of them were humans who turned into beasts and behaved like predators; others were deformed, had strange habits, and usually lived in distant lands.

One of the chroniclers of the old world, Roman author Pliny the Elder, created a corpus on monsters that would be widely quoted through the Middle Ages and continued to make its mark into modernity. To him, metamorphosing creatures, such as werewolves, were imaginary. But, like many of his contemporaries, Pliny believed the “real” monsters dwelled in faraway lands. His *Natural History* (AD 77), contains a compilation of monstrous races based on older chronicles by Greek travellers, such as Ctesias (fifth century BC) and Megasthenes (fourth century BC). The Cynocephali or dog-heads (see **FT286:32-37**), the



LEFT: One of Pliny’s ‘monstrous races’ – the Panotii – as seen in the 15th century *Nuremberg Chronicle*. **FACING PAGE:** An Occupy Wall Street supporter dressed as a corporate zombie at a protest in New York in 2011.

By giving them physical abnormalities, God had marked them as inferior

Hippopodes (horse-feet) or the Panotii, whose ears were so big they brushed the floor, are among the best known of the so-called Plinian races. Subsequent generations of adventurers would return from their journeys with tales of monstrous beings at the edge of the world, as if distant lands could not be populated by regular folk. Monsters were those who lived beyond our boundaries – they were, simply put,

the Others. But their existence posed a crucial theological question: why did God create them?

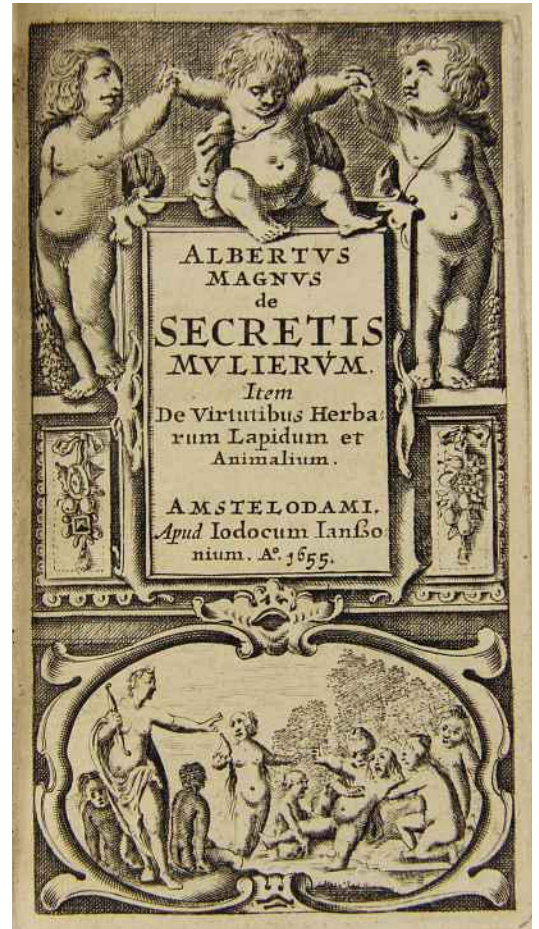
In the fourth century, St Augustine referred to the monstrous races as worthy of salvation. His reasoning was simple: they had to be, as they were also God’s creatures. But to Christian thinkers, monsters were a warning, a living exemplum: by giving them

physical abnormalities, God had marked them as morally inferior. It is from this idea that the word “monster” derives: the Latin root *monere* means to warn.

The association between beauty and goodness was an ancient idea that had already troubled Plato in the fourth century BC. The philosopher’s mentor, Socrates, was “profoundly ugly”, yet charismatic and talented. At a time when a beautiful face was thought to equal nobility of spirit, such a contrast must have baffled his contemporaries. The Classical concept of beauty wasn’t lenient – it was based on divine proportions, and anything that escaped them would be considered unnatural and immoral. This idea persisted well into the Middle Ages, when non-Christians were often portrayed as deformed. Later, in the Renaissance, the so-called monstrous births were used by both Protestants and Catholics as a political tool: to each side, birth defects and malformations were evidence of God’s displeasure with the actions of the other.



EAT
THE
POOR



ABOVE LEFT: One of Hieronymous Bosch's renderings of the Temptation of St Anthony. ABOVE RIGHT: The 13th century treatise *De Secretis Mulierum* located the source of the monstrous in the horrors of lascivious females and their reproductive powers. BELOW: The Villa Diodati, the birthplace of the modern monster.

CHRISTIANITY AND ITS MONSTERS

In Christian iconography, monsters lurk everywhere. They are used as symbols of temptation, as in the visions of St Anthony evoked by Hieronymus Bosch and Matthias Grünewald. In churches and cathedrals, recumbent effigies represented lords and ladies, saints and clerics stepping over dragons, the emblem of evil. Christianity, of course, had its own dragon-slaying hero in St George, with the monster emerging as the epitome of evil. In some depictions, the creature also becomes an allusion to temptation: in the 15th century *Hours of the Virgin*, it lies in a vulnerable position in front of the knight, showing its female genitalia, indicating that the threat comes from the lure of the flesh. The spearing of the monster becomes a twisted reference to penetration, but the emphasis is on St George's chastity and refusal of carnal sin.

In the late 13th-century treatise *De Secretis Mulierum* (On the Secrets of Women), the author, thought to be the Dominican friar Albertus Magnus, shakes off the thorny theological question of God's responsibility for the existence of monsters with a predictable move – blaming women. Some monsters, the text explains, are born of the intercourse between a woman and a beast. But women were impure, and didn't even need animals for their twisted acts of



*To Christianity,
monsters are those
who turn their
backs on God*

creation: the more pleasure they had during intercourse, the greater the risk of giving birth to a monster.

To surrender to temptation – to sin – is, essentially, to transgress divine law. To Christianity, monsters are those who turn their backs on God: in the otherworldly sphere, demons, the fallen angels who rebelled against His authority; on Earth, witches, the mortals who chose to serve them. The nature of witch hunts meant that communities were able to accuse their enemies without proof. It was up to the religious authorities to decide who was or wasn't a witch, thus revealing who society singled out as the Other: mostly women who were disruptive of patriarchal authority – the midwives, the folk healers, the elderly who lived alone. Of course, witches weren't seen as entirely human: they had been invested with supernatural powers – among them, the ability to shapeshift, like the monsters from long ago.

THE BIRTH OF THE MODERN MONSTER

The modern history of monsters begins in 1816, with a gathering of Romantic poets in Villa Diodati, on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland (see the author's "A Summer of Monsters", FT343:38-44). None of them followed the rules of polite society: Mary and Percy Shelley had been

ostracised after their elopement, since he was already a married man; Lord Byron, who had brought his personal physician, John William Polidori, was followed by rumours of incest, madness, and sodomy. The gathering produced the two most important monsters in modern popular culture: the vampire and Frankenstein's creature. But only the latter marked a cultural shift in our understanding of monsters.

To produce her *Frankenstein*, 18-year-old Mary Shelley tapped into harrowing personal experiences – her mother's death, 10 days after Mary's birth, and the loss of her own firstborn, a two-month premature baby girl. Galvanism and resuscitating techniques inspired the outcome. As a Romantic, Mary Shelley was interested in the outcasts of society, and what was a monster, if not the ultimate expression of disenfranchisement? The creature, with his "shrivelled complexion and straight black lips", and his "horrible", "hideous" face, is abhorred by all, even his maker, yet he has our sympathies. Perhaps for the first time we could see ourselves reflected in the monster: his loneliness, his search for acceptance, his existential dread.

In contrast, Polidori had no sympathy for his monster. His *Vampyre* distils social anxiety: the fear of an aristocrat taking advantage of his status to sleep with our loved ones; ultimately eclipsing us and destroying them. Lord Ruthven, after all, is the Establishment. That it is an allegory of the author's relationship with Byron seems evident, but he wasn't Polidori's only source of inspiration. Similar beliefs appear in ancient folklore all around the world: blood-sucking Babylonian demons Lilitu and Lamashu, corpse-possessing Indian ghosts called *vetalas*, hungry Greek demigoddesses Lamia and Empusa. They remained in the collective imagination via the plague epidemics, when natural physiological changes in corpses were more visible due to the high mortality rates and hasty burials. Seeing fresh blood staining the lips of a dead body, one that was seemingly plumper than it had been in life, would have sparked people's imaginations.

Polidori's tale was hugely successful in its time, but the vampire's golden ticket to stardom was *Dracula*, the 1897 novel by Bram Stoker (see Gail-Nina Anderson, "The Many Lives of Count Dracula", **FT257:34-41**). Stoker created in the Count a central European immigrant who moves unnoticed through London, killing, spreading disease, threatening the order of the Empire. *Dracula* spoke of contemporary fears of immigration and the rise of ghetto communities in a post-Jack the Ripper London; but also of sexual fears about liberated women and venereal disease. As it had been the case with Polidori's Ruthven, the Count isn't a sympathetic figure. Although *Varney, the Vampire* (1845) had already despised his condition, it wouldn't be until the 1936 film *Dracula's Daughter* that a vampire was



portrayed as tragic, a trope later popularised in the Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* (1966) and in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). Perhaps it took so long because the vampire's otherness is double: as a revenant, we fear the vampire because he or she has returned from the other side; as a monster, (s)he preys on our blood and threatens our identity and our existence.

THE MONSTER INSIDE US

The publication of Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) had a great impact on Victorian beliefs, with lines that must have felt like an opium-fuelled bad dream. Humans, wrote Darwin, descended "from a hairy, tailed quadruped" that itself had evolved from "some amphibian-like creature, and this again from some fish-like animal". His words suggested that the Ancients were

right: there was, indeed, something primal and feral inside all of us.

The ancient trope of monstrous transformation was updated via a scientific concoction in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Hyde, described as "ape-like" and "troglodytic", represents a regression to a more primitive stage of development, like the ones described by Darwin. Stevenson dared to reveal not only that the monster was within us, but also that it could be hiding under a respectable façade. When he writes "Man is not truly one, but truly two", he tells us that society is built on duplicity. In the story, Victorian London, the centre of the Empire, is built on economic contrasts, and even Dr Jekyll's house is a divided space, with a respectable frontage and a darker back area dominated by the "old dissecting room door", a reference to the crimes committed by the – again, apparently respectable – resurrectionists.

Four years later, Oscar Wilde played with similar themes and subverted the Classical concept of beauty in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), suggesting that the rich and the beautiful may be capable of the most atrocious crimes. Wilde's work was deemed indecent and, as such, heavily censored. Both authors knew about duplicity and both transgressed societal norms: Stevenson lived a bohemian life before marrying his wife, an American divorcée 10 years his senior, and settling in the South Seas; Wilde's contemporaries forced his downfall and untimely death after charging him with "gross indecency", euphemistic words for homosexual practices.

Victorian monsters crossed boundaries to live in our era largely because of the enduring power of the moving image. Cinema, still practically a newborn, was



TOP: The 1936 film *Dracula's Daughter* was an early portrayal of the vampire as a tragic figure. **ABOVE:** Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* played on the idea of the monster lurking behind a civilised facade.

MAKING MONSTERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH GUILLERMO DEL TORO

MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO talks to the director of *The Shape of Water* about the mechanics of the fairy tale, the politics of horror and the challenges of creating a gill-man for the 21st century



LEFT: Guillermo del Toro.

BELOW: A poster for the director's forthcoming film *The Shape of Water*.

He's ultimately not seen as human, which is the ultimate disenfranchisement. I wanted to make the antagonist a guy that really, really believes he's a good guy. He thinks of himself as a decent guy, with a very American sort of decency.

And you see something dark in him.

Yes. Very dark. The Tao says that in order for something to be good, you're making something bad. In order for you to say something is beautiful, you're making something ugly. In other words, that type of definition of quality, whether it's moral, or physical, spiritual, immediately makes a dichotomy. The way that Michael Shannon's character sees the world, by defining something as good and decent and wholesome, he's defining something else as indecent, incomplete or deplorable. In order to get this wholesome *Saturday Evening Post* notion of America, you are involuntarily creating an undesirable America, impoverished, sub-educated, race-segregated, because that doesn't belong on that *Saturday Evening Post* cover. That's the type of America he believes in.

Why the reference to water as an element?

To me, the movie is an antidote to the scepticism of living. It's about beauty and love. Nowadays, when you talk about hatred, you sound sophisticated; when you talk about love, you sound naïve.

The Creature is the shape of love, in a way. The movie

Guillermo del Toro's latest film, *The Shape of Water*, has been hailed as his best yet, a political fairy tale that tells the love story between a mute cleaning lady and a gill-man held captive in a secret government laboratory. Del Toro kindly found the time to talk to *FT* – his favourite magazine – about the inspiration behind the film, how he built his creature, and his creative process.

What makes *The Shape of Water* a fairy tale and not a monster movie?

A fairy tale normally has a character that discovers something grander, and discovers his or her destiny through that adventure, that rite of passage. In *The Shape of Water* it is a woman, who, as in most fairytales, has a humble origin, and discovers a destiny much, much grander than she imagined. In a fairy tale, the mundane existence that the main character leads is revealed not to be his or her

destiny. There's an element in *The Shape of Water* that would be a spoiler, so I won't discuss it, but that imbues everything with a divine origin, and predestination.

If this were a monster movie, the hero would be Michael Shannon, and the creature would be an anomaly that needs to be dominated or destroyed, or something that is pernicious. But you definitely wouldn't see it from the point of view of a cleaning woman falling in love with the creature. The tone is that of a fairy tale, so the visual tone is magical. The images are fastidiously designed, in a way that is not trying to look like reality, but is rather a construction. The camera work, the light, the music, the sound, are all very magical, very much not trying to emulate 1962 – like you would in a realistic movie.

Why did you set it in 1962?

It's the end of American innocence. It's the end of the big promise about the

future. It's placed at that point exactly when America believes it has a huge future. In fact, to me, 1962 is the fall from grace. Because you have the jet fin cars, the kitchens, the fashion... everything talks about modernity. And in the movie, very pointedly, the screenplay talks about those things – the future being hopeful, you know. Later, Kennedy will die and with him, I think, dies an America that exists only in its own dream. America dreams of itself the way they dreamt in 1962.

Did you use the setting to illustrate current fears?

Yes, very much. I started writing the movie thinking about now. Before Trump, I felt there was a current of racism, misogyny, and prejudice growing, and I wanted to set it in a time that illustrated this, but without making it openly about that. The Creature is the ultimate disenfranchised. He's not left-wing, he doesn't have a race, or a creed.

is about love being the most powerful force in the Universe, and, like water, it has no shape; it takes the shape of whatever the recipient is. Bruce Lee and the Tao both say water is the strongest and most malleable element on Earth: if you put it in a glass, it takes the form of a glass; if you put it in a vase, it takes the form of a vase, and even though it's very malleable it will go through stone. And the same with love. The shape of love, the shape of water – it's the same thing.

How did you design the creature?

The Creature is a tribute to all the gill-men in the history of the movies, but not one in particular. The environment is designed to house the creature, because if you put a creature in a normal movie it would look out of place. You need to believe that, within that universe of the movie, the creature is real. And you cannot go completely real because

then the rest of the design – the sets, the wardrobe – wouldn't match.

What was the process like?

It took us approximately 14 months. I paid about a quarter of a million dollars out of my own pocket to have six months to design it. And the sculptor moved to my house, basically, and we worked together, and it was very, very delicate. It's the most difficult creature we've done.

I based some of the ideas on the Japanese engravings, a big Hokusai carp, for example. Then we did about 20 colour schemes. We chose one, and even within that we started adding colours... and we painted the creature from head to toe completely about three or four times – I mean, changed the design.

And then you have that amazing sparkling effect.

Yes, the creature has bioluminescence. Its face is

very, very complex, and it can look intelligent, angry, sad, because it has sculptural details that go against painted details. And then you have Doug [Jones] acting on top of that.

The creature is a mixture of digital and make-up, but most of it is make-up. In some instances, we overlay the blinking of the eyes, and some of the forehead and some of the lips and some of the jaw and so forth, so that it's a constant seamless blending between physical effects and digital effects.

What attracts you about horror, monsters, and fairy tales?

I'm attracted to the visuals of horror, but not the mechanics. I'm interested in the mechanics of fairy tale with the visuals of horror, because I think they're very similar. *Hansel and Gretel* is basically a horror story; the original *Cinderella* is a horror story, so is *Little Red Riding Hood* and so forth. I think that horror and the fairy tale walk hand in hand. When I produce, I like to scare people – I like things like *The Orphanage* or *Mama*; but as a director, the scares are the thing that interest me the least. I get very bored with it.

What happened to your *Frankenstein* project?

It will happen one day, but it's a very big endeavour. I would like to do it long – four to six hours – so maybe for TV.

Will it be connected to the Dark Universe?

No. I was at some point going to do it, because it was going to be about the classic monsters, but Universal have a very strong idea of what they want now, and I'm interested in the classic monsters.

What's coming after *The Shape of Water*?

We're doing *Fantastic Voyage* with Fox, but I don't know for sure. That's what it's looking like now. We're continuing with *Trollhunters*, and then after that I don't know...

taken with Stevenson's novel: at least eight adaptations were produced between 1908 and 1920. It was the beginning of cinema's love affair with monsters.

CREATURES OF DARKNESS

In his 1946 essay *From Caligari to Hitler*, Siegfried Kracauer saw *Nosferatu* (1922), the covert adaptation of *Dracula* by German director Friedrich Murnau (see Brian J Robb, "The Vampire and the Occultist", *FT* 326:30-36), as a foreshadowing of the political crisis yet to come. To Kracauer, Expressionist cinema was working as a sort of seismograph for the collective unconscious, predicting Hitler's rise to power in its representations of mind-controlling, mass-murdering, authoritarian villains. *Nosferatu*'s Count Orlock epitomised the "blood-sucking tyrant figure" capable of mesmerising and subjugating the German psyche. Yet the supernatural atmosphere in Expressionist films and their emotional effect on contemporary anxieties may, according to Linda Schulte-Sasse, have facilitated rather than foreseen Nazism: Orlock, like *Dracula*, can easily be seen as the foreigner who spreads death and disease, a metaphor pulled straight from a Nazi propaganda poster.

And, while Nazi propaganda depicted the party's enemies as monsters, Hitler prosecuted the avant-garde art produced under the Weimar Republic, accusing it of drawing "cretins as symbols of motherhood" and presenting "deformed idiots as representatives of manly strength". Artists and filmmakers fled Germany, and some of them landed in Hollywood, where the visual language they had worked on in their native country would help create the most iconic representations of monsters in contemporary culture.

ONE OF US

Universal Studios had produced two major Gothic movies during the silent era: *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1923) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925), both starring Lon Chaney as a deformed character other people regard as a monster. Chaney had made a career by playing disabled or grotesque characters, misfits, and underdogs. Perhaps the time was right – after





LEFT: Todd Browning's controversial 1932 *Freaks*.
BELOW: Lon Chaney, the 'Man of a Thousand Faces' who portrayed grotesques and misfits.

that originally reflected the anxieties of the Establishment, is, for the first time, not a repulsive creature who brings plague and death, but an impeccably-tailored aristocrat who seduces his victims, and the hidden evil is unleashed when Renfield, a smart businessman, refuses to heed the warnings of the peasants – the wisdom of the folk. Meanwhile, Frankenstein's monster, disowned by his upper-class master, wears ill-fitting, utilitarian clothes, like a manual labourer, and is presented as a misunderstood victim of the *status quo*.

After the success of *Dracula*, director Tod Browning chose to make *Freaks* (1932), a parable of the social inequality that plagued Depression-era America and a subversion of the Classical concept of beauty still worshipped by modern Hollywood. Browning opened *Freaks* with a disclaimer: "In ancient times, anything that deviated from the normal was considered an omen of ill luck or representative of evil." In the film, the physically deformed are honourable and dignified; the "regular folk" – those who are beautiful and strong and who enjoy the status that confers – are the real monsters. If the denouement seems to have a different tone to the rest of the film, it's because it was the subject of production disagreements. According to William S Hart Jr, Browning wanted an ending that would highlight "the sadness of the poor people that couldn't ever be part of the other people", but the studio pushed for a "wild revenge to make a macabre ending" instead, and they won. The final scene, where the "freaks" team up to avenge one of their kind, is still controversial, but would it have been considered so, had they all been strong and handsome, crawling through the mud to avenge their friend from a hideous monster?

THE MONSTER REVOLUTION

After the horrors of World War II, the Cold War and the nuclear menace called for a different kind of escapism. The fictional creatures born in this context had a mythical quality, but with a contemporary twist. This was provided by radiation, which could awaken ancient beasts, as in *Godzilla*, or alter anyone's nature, turning them into a monster, as seen in *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, or *The Fly*. At the end of most of these films, different nations unite to restore the lost peace; wishful thinking in uneasy times.

In England, the unexpected success of *The Curse of Frankenstein* inspired Hammer Films to reinvent the Gothic monsters for a new generation, this time ripe with eroticism, violence, and blood, enhanced by the vivid hues of Eastmancolor (see Kim Newman, "English Gothic", *FT*223:30-36). The media

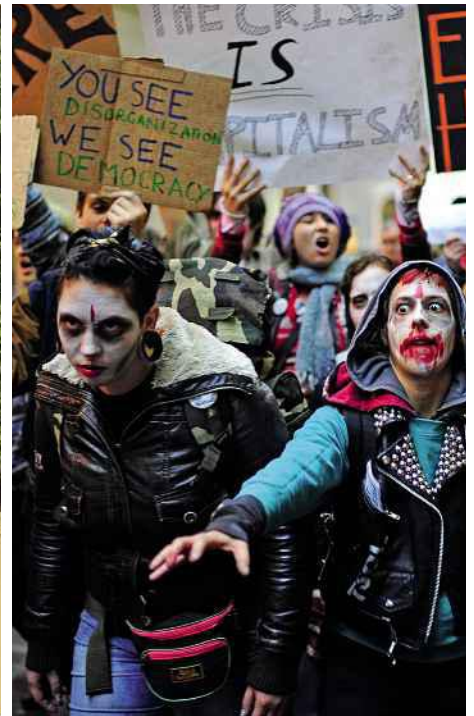
World War I, many soldiers had returned home maimed or disfigured – but Chaney had genuine reverence for these characters and endured much suffering to transform into them. "I wanted to remind people that the dwarfed, misshapen beggar of the streets may have the noblest ideals", he said. "If I have given one person a feeling of brotherly love, of sympathy and understanding for the downtrodden creatures of Earth, I feel well repaid for all that I went through."

Shortly after the Great Depression began, Universal bought the rights to adapt *Dracula*. Chaney was due to star as the Count, but he died in 1930, just before production started. Even though the lead was played by the then obscure actor Bela Lugosi, the feature's huge success paved the way for *Frankenstein* (1931) and for the other creatures Universal is still renowned for.

The key players behind the success of these films were outsiders. The monsters weren't played by A-list stars, but by character actors: Lugosi was a Hungarian immigrant who had to flee his country due to his political activism. Karloff was the black sheep of a wealthy family, stuttering, bow-legged and with a lisp. Before arriving in Hollywood, he performed years of manual labour that left him with chronic health problems. The films'



directors were unconventional, too: *Dracula's* Tod Browning had left his family to run away with the circus, aged 16; *Frankenstein's* James Whale was an openly gay, working-class Englishman. The Depression was crippling the country; the wolf was at every door. Perhaps because of this, the adaptations of these two literary classics seemed current and politically charged: *Dracula*, a monster



EMMANUEL DUNAND / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Director Jacques Tourneur's *I Walked With a Zombie* retained elements of traditional Caribbean folklore. **ABOVE:** It was the films of George Romero that transformed the zombie into a truly post-modern monster that could be employed for horror, satire or social protest, as in this Occupy Wall Street demo in 2011.

reacted negatively and criticised horror films as inferior and reprehensible fare, but the box office figures were clear: the public loved them. Horror was seen as subversive; liking it had a whiff of rebellion against authority. Frankenstein's monster was to become an icon of counterculture, inspiring rock and roll songs and appearing on badges and T-shirts.

From the late 1960s, the monstrous emerged from inside the nuclear family in films that played with Christian themes: *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Omen*, and *The Exorcist*, were reflections of social change in Europe and America. Horror cinema would experience a revolution in the 1970s, when young directors developed their own cinematic language with small budgets and a political attitude born from the frustrations of the era.

THE MONSTERS OF COLONIALISM

Pre-20th century colonialism is responsible for the creation of one of the most pervasive monsters in the modern world, pop culture's current darling, the zombie. Born in a specific context, in 17th century French-ruled Haiti, where plantation masters committed horrific abuses on slaves, zombies are an evolution of African folklore beliefs that refer to the theft of souls (see Marina Warner, "Transformations", *FT*164:46-48). The original zombie is a reanimated body forced to work as a slave for an eternity of exploitation. To a slave, there would be nothing worse than being zombified. It would mean being denied the release that only death could bring: the return to *lan guinée* – literally Guinea, West Africa – which in Haitian Creole still means

Heaven.

The earliest zombie films – from 1932's *White Zombie* to Val Lewton's 1943 *Jane Eyre* reimagining, *I Walked with a Zombie* – retain certain elements of Caribbean folklore; but the film that shaped our modern vision of these creatures is completely removed from that context and never used the word "zombie": the monsters in George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) feast on human flesh, behave erratically, and are referred to as "ghouls". The film has been seen as an allegory for America's collapsing social order, with the hungry creatures devoid of empathy bringing out the worst in human nature. Years later, in *Dawn of the Dead* (1981), Romero would satirise mass consumer society, with the undead taking over a shopping mall.

Zombies have evolved from their colonial origins to become a parable of our neoliberal times. A zombie is a worker who won't complain, won't go on strike, won't demand a pay rise or a sick day. In current popular culture, film, television, and videogames are consumed with the depiction of a zombie apocalypse that sometimes feels uncomfortably close to a fascist utopia – a gun-wielding world where only the fittest survive, a return-to-nature fantasy that requires the enslavement of the masses to ensure the survival of the few. In this scenario, only the lives of the main players matter.

RETURN OF THE CLASSIC MONSTERS?

Earlier this year, Universal launched its Dark Universe, which would apparently see the resurrection of their beloved classic monsters in a shared cinematic universe. After the

lukewarm response to *The Mummy* (2017), the company decided to postpone plans for *The Bride of Frankenstein*. What we know about the Dark Universe is that it favours an action-adventure tone, with big budgets, a contemporary setting, and A-list actors. The monsters have changed – not only in their appearance, but their essence. The danger of turning them into superhero figures is that they will now become closer to mythological creatures, stripped of what made them – in the original cycle of the 1930s and early 1940s – so powerfully human. This is emphasised by the fact that they will be played by some of the most popular actors in Hollywood: by the rich and the beautiful.

While some new horror films like *Get Out* (2017) are undoubtedly political, our classic monsters have been commodified and depoliticised. They no longer serve as a vehicle to articulate current fears and cultural anxieties; they don't speak of oppression, as good monsters do. Just as the fashion industry engulfs the aesthetics of subcultures, the monsters have been absorbed and tamed by the Establishment. If there's something we desperately need in an era of political turmoil it is a re-emergence of fictional monsters that make us reflect. History tells us that some monsters can heal: they build a bridge towards what we cannot understand, they make us question our concepts of "self" and "other", and they help us challenge the status quo.

♦ **MARIA J PÉREZ CUERVO** is a writer who specialises in history, archaeology, myth and mystery, and a regular *FT* contributor.

On the Trail of the Loveland Frogman

ROB RYDER takes a lonely drive along River Road in search of the mysterious Ohio Frogman – was it a giant amphibian, an extraterrestrial visitor or just an escaped pet iguana?

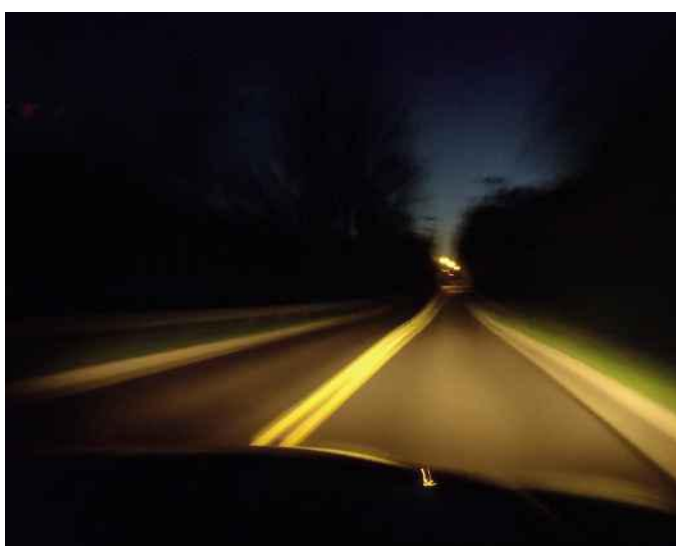
Clawing and pulling its way up the steep embankment, a strange creature rose from the Little Miami River in the sleepy town of Loveland, Ohio. Upon being spotted by a police car, the creature hobbled on two legs towards the road's guardrail. With one motion, the thing swung one leg over the railing, then the other, and disappeared into the river below. This was the scene reported in 1972 by a police officer patrolling River Road.

Occasional sightings of a strange creature still occur in the area, but these days they are infrequent. Nevertheless, I was determined to see where this bizarre creature had once supposedly roamed; so, I set out for Loveland with little more than a notepad, pencil, and a pair of fishing waders to examine the frogman's lair at first hand.

WELCOME TO LOVELAND

Loveland is much like countless other small towns in the Midwestern United States. Rows of houses with neatly trimmed lawns adorn the quiet streets, and parks offer families the opportunity to relax and enjoy a walk or picnic. A suburb of Cincinnati, Loveland has been called "The Sweetheart's Town", presumably a reference to its name. However, the creature on which Loveland's cryptozoological fame rests is probably no one's idea of a sweetheart. Described as possessing a frog- or lizard-like head, the Loveland Frogman has tended to leave witnesses in a state of shock.

Perhaps the most famous sighting was the aforementioned 1972 incident. At 1am on 3 March, officer Ray Shockey swerved his police cruiser to avoid a frog-like creature illuminated in his headlights: it was, according to his description, about 3-4ft tall (90-120cm) with leathery skin and it looked directly at him before it crossed



LEFT: River Road at night, the traditional haunt of the Loveland Frogman. **FACING PAGE:** Richard Svensson's artistic rendering of the mysterious giant amphibian.

The Frogman hobbled across the road and slid into the river below

the road, climbed over the guardrail and jumped into the river below. A couple of weeks later, another officer, Mark Matthews, had an equally startling encounter. As he approached what he thought was a dead animal in the road, the "carcass" adopted a crouching position, rather like that of an American Football player. The officer fired, and the possibly wounded Frogman made its signature escape – hobbling across the road, scaling the guardrail and sliding into the river below.¹ While these 1972 sightings are what put the Frogman on the map, an earlier sighting also raised suspicions that something strange had set up camp in or around Loveland.

Back in 1955, a local businessman named

Robert Hunnicutt claimed that while driving near Loveland he had encountered what he described as several "troll-like" creatures; appropriately enough, they were underneath a bridge. When Hunnicutt slowed his car and approached the creatures, he could see that they were about three feet tall and kneeling by the side of the road. They had frog-like faces and one of them held an object in the air that "emitted

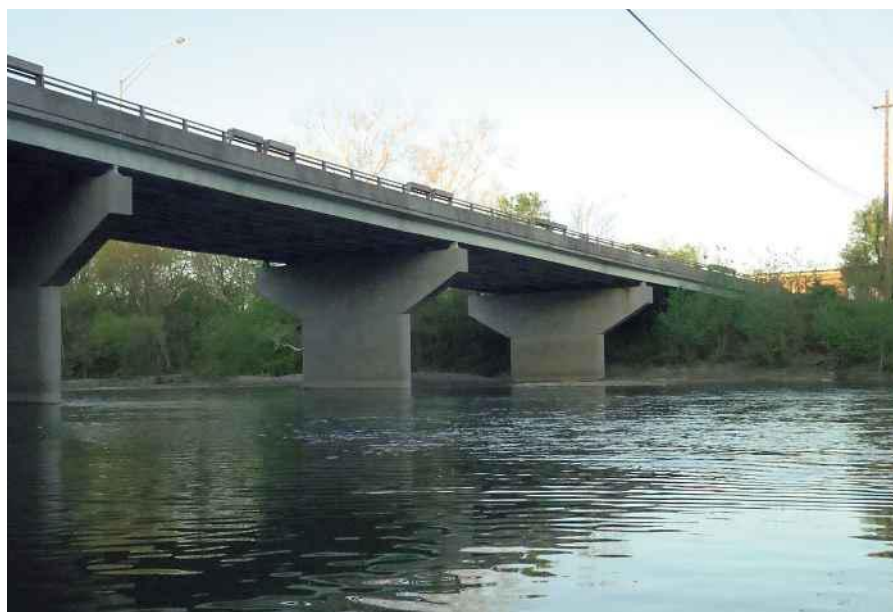
sparks". The businessman said he had no recollection of what happened after he approached the things; his next memory was of being back in his car and driving towards the police station.²

AMPHIBIANS GREAT AND SMALL

As I drove along River Road, where the sightings took place, I searched for an area to get out of the car and investigate the river below.

The original 1972 sighting took place in late March, a time when much of Ohio is slowly awakening from the bitter chill of winter and creatures of all sorts begin to make their first appearance of the year. March is also a period of heavy rainfall, and would be the natural time for a large amphibian or reptile to leave its winter dormancy and begin to search for food. Finding a small park giving access to the river, I strapped on fishing waders and walked towards the water. As I approached, I was startled by a splash caused by something large. Whatever had made its hasty exit in response to my presence was at least a foot long and created enough of a wake to be quite noticeable. Was the creature fleeing the shallows a large frog?





Unlikely. The river is filled with a variety of fish, such as carp and smallmouth bass, while turtles are also known to rest in the shallows and flee to deeper water when predators approach the shoreline.

Stepping into the muddy water, the first thing I noticed was how quickly the river got deeper. As I walked towards the middle of the river, I found myself some three to four feet deep in the water after walking eight feet. Beneath me, muddy substrate was interspersed with rocks. The water temperature was cool, but not frigid – certainly warm enough to support amphibians.

I have seen many strange things during periods of unusually intense rain. Only weeks before my visit to Loveland, my wife and I were travelling through a different part of Ohio for a short tour of the countryside. Suddenly, an intense rainstorm began, pummeling the landscape with large drops of water that saturated the ground very quickly. I noticed that parts of the road seemed suddenly to be alive. A light fog rising from the road intensified the strangeness, as small creatures hopped across the road with increasing frequency. On closer inspection, I saw that the road we were driving on was filled by a great many frogs, ranging from approximately one to five inches in length.

The little creatures had perhaps been awakened from their winter slumber by the unusually intense rainfall. I made every effort to avoid running them over, making minor adjustments in our vehicle's path; unfortunately, I was unable to avoid all of them, and hit several as I drove. I estimate that I saw at least 100 crossing the waterlogged highway as we drove along it. While it seems unlikely, there is certainly a possibility that the 1972 sightings were of a much bigger cousin of the small frogs I saw dashing across the road on that March night.

In Ohio, the largest amphibian on record is a species of salamander called the

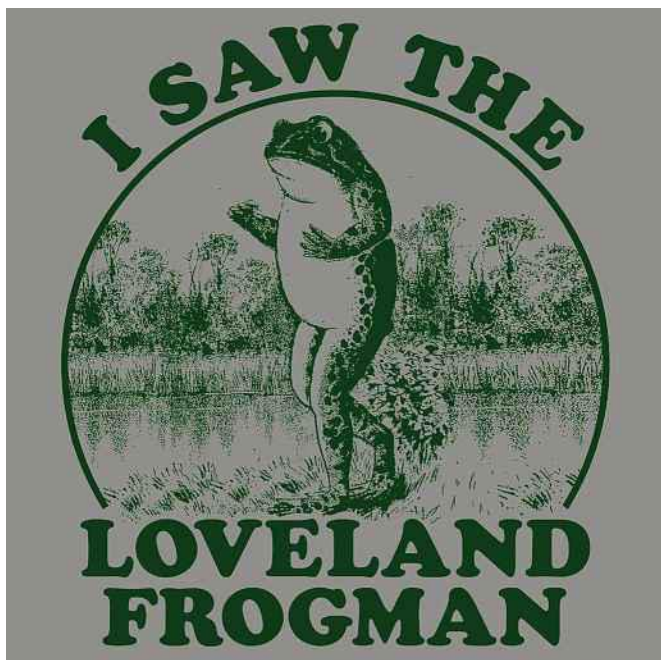
hellbender (*Cryptobranchus alleganiensis*). A rather ugly but endearing creature, the hellbender can reach lengths of up to 25in (63cm). Extensive folds of skin increase the surface area over which oxygen can be absorbed. Another amphibian of grand proportions is the Asian giant salamander. Native to China and Japan, it can grow to five or six feet (1.5-1.8m) in length, and there are tales of it attacking small boats and their human occupants.

The Trinity Alps wilderness region of California is associated with multiple accounts of very large salamanders, as well with reports from the 1920s to the 1940s speaking of them reaching incredible lengths of between five to nine feet (1.5-2.7m); there was even a rare, recent sighting reported in March 2015 of an example that was 5ft long (see FT329:21). But while there are certainly examples of amphibians reaching enormous sizes, the Loveland Frogman is the only such creature reported as walking upright on two legs.

The next step in my investigation was to drive the section of River Road in which the creature was seen not just once, but several times. I believed this would be the best way to get a feel for what the area was like and see where the sightings had taken place. Taking into consideration the fact that the principal sightings dated from over 40 years ago, I tried to imagine the area before additional development had taken place. River Road had a very eerie appearance as I drove its length, twisting and turning with the shape of the river it followed. On one side of the road was the guardrail that the creature had allegedly traversed when returning to the water. Many sections of the opposite side of the river had extensive brush and ground cover that could provide numerous hiding places for a large creature. Even with bright headlights on, as dusk approached I felt very alone.



TOP: The bridge over the Little Miami River outside Loveland. CENTRE AND ABOVE: The author, in waders and woolly hat, steps into the muddy waters of the Little Miami in search of clues.



ROB RYDER

ABOVE LEFT: A T-shirt design sporting Loveland's amphibian celebrity. ABOVE RIGHT: The author's teapot – and the only frog he saw during his entire trip.

FROGMEN FROM OUTER SPACE?

While driving, I wondered what those police officers had seen back in 1972. The two most plausible explanations that I could think of were a mutated example of an existing species of amphibian or a creature of extraterrestrial origin. Ohio is a region with considerable industrial activity, and years of dumping a range of toxic by-products into the state's waterways have unfortunately impacted many of the Ohio's delicate aquatic ecosystems. Amphibians are known to be very sensitive to pollutants and other changes in water chemistry – but could pollution have led to a genetic mutation that allowed one or more ordinary frogs species common to the Little Miami River to grow to gargantuan size?

Another possible explanation is that the Frogman (or Frogmen) was not of Earthly origin at all. In Robert Hunnicutt's 1955 sighting, one of the creatures underneath the bridge near Loveland was reportedly holding a device that "emitted sparks". This, coupled with the fact that the witness then had a missing time experience makes the whole thing sound more like an alien encounter. Indeed, the sightings were investigated by UFO researchers Leonard Stringfield and Ted Blocher. Was the Loveland Frogman an extraterrestrial?

Reflecting on other accounts of other large frog- or lizard-like creatures, one that quickly came to mind was the Lizard Man of Bishopville, South Carolina (see Benjamin Radford, "The Lizard Man of Scape Ore Swamp", FT333:26-34). At a height of seven feet (2m), the Lizard Man was said to be much taller than the more diminutive Frogman. While both creatures possessed claws capable of leaving scratches on the ground and metal objects,³ the Lizard Man

The Frogman hobbled across the road and slid into the river below

– pursuing and damaging vehicles – was far more aggressive than the Frogman, which seemed content to crouch by the roadside and hobble off when disturbed.

Perhaps there's a more mundane explanation for the whole affair. One of the officers who'd encountered the creature in 1972 later retracted his story. Mark Matthews – who originally stated he'd let off a shot at the creature – reportedly said in a 2001 email interview that all he saw was a large lizard – possibly an escaped pet iguana. However, the creature the officer described, sketched – and suffered considerable personal and professional criticism to report – was certainly no iguana. Matthews's 'retraction' doesn't seem to help us very much when it comes to solving the mystery of Ohio's famous Frogman.

As I packed my things and prepared to leave the quiet town of Loveland, I went through my morning ritual of preparing a proper cup of tea before hitting the road. The teapot I'd brought along for my adventure was a fitting match for my search for Loveland's Frogman. Small and round, it held only a single cup of tea; but it was beautifully decorated with a small lily pad and frog on its lid. I lamented the fact that the only frog I had seen on my trip was the small clay one

peering up at me from the top of my teapot. But wherever he may be, I hope that the Ohio Frogman is alive and well, and planning his next appearance in the otherwise sleepy and uneventful town of Loveland.⁴

NOTES

1 For many years the officers were known only by the pseudonyms of Officers 'Williams' and 'Johnson' to protect them from widespread ridicule; apparently, it didn't, and further witnesses were supposedly reluctant to come forward as a result. The officers' real names were only revealed in 1985, partly as a result of a rash of new sightings in the previous couple of years. See "Loveland Leaps Back", FT46:19.

2 There are other variations of the story, some involving a truck driver. As Loren Coleman has pointed out, these sightings perhaps belong as much to the fortaean as the ufological literature. See "Creatures from the Black Lagoon", FT40:43-47.

3 The Frogman is said in some accounts to have left scratch-marks on the guardrail, discovered by Ray Shockey's fellow officers while following up on his initial 1972 sighting.

4 Since I visited, the Frogman seems to have returned to his old haunts. On the night of 3 August 2016, two teenagers playing Pokemon Go between Loveland Madeira Road and Lake Isabella reported seeing a giant frog near the lake which "stood up and walked on its hind legs". www.fox19.com/story/32688947/legend-of-loveland-frogman-lives-on

A different version of this article appeared in *FATE* magazine. For other stories of Lizard Men and related phenomena, see also: Paul Sieveking, "Lizard Men", FT51:34-37; Ulrich Magin, "Scaly Horrors", FT63:40-43.

♦♦ **ROB RYDER** is an English instructor at a community college in Ohio, where he lives with his wife Lindsay, baby son Finley, and cats Nemo and Belle. When not teaching, grading papers, or spending time with his family, Rob enjoys investigating cryptids and fortaean phenomena in and around Ohio.

“The truth is around here... someplace”

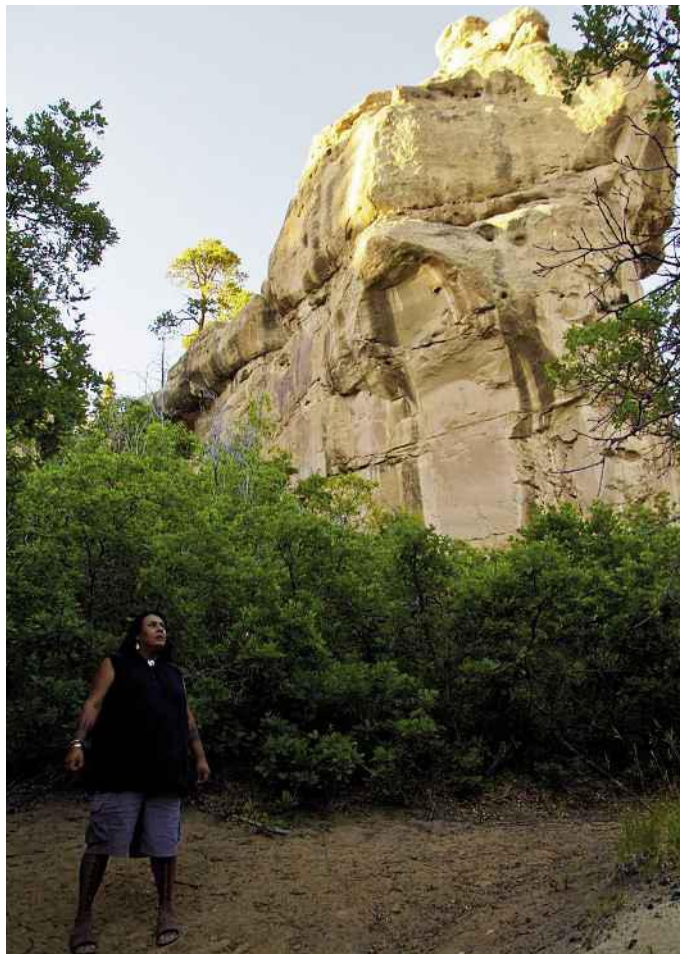
PAUL ROSS attends a UFO conference with a difference: it's run by Native American tribes living around the town of Dulce, New Mexico – and they're as likely to tell you about their Bigfoot and skinwalker encounters as to share their saucer sightings. Photos by the author.

I was going to my first UFO convention and the key questions were: Will the guests of honour show up? Or are they already here?

Among conspiracy cognoscenti, Dulce, New Mexico, is prime alien country; it's where “they” – the secret governments that really control the world – are working with “them” – the Greys, Nordics, Reptilians and, for all I know, Klingons.

The Internet is rife with leaked secret footage of a local but massive underground complex in Dulce, where plots and cross-species hybrids are hatched. And it's all linked to the capitals of the world by a network of tunnels, with trains that can relocate passengers from northern New Mexico to Washington, D.C., in seven minutes.

What's different about the Dulce Base UFO Conference is that it takes place on the land where the events being discussed actually happened – and are still occurring – and that it's organised and run by Native American tribes – Jicarilla Apache, Southern Ute and Dineh or Navajo. It includes tribal members taking conference attendees onto legally restricted sacred lands where not only have there been close encounters of at least two kinds, but also paranormal experiences which run the gamut from ghosts to a resident Bigfoot population. I hoped to speak to indigenous folk who've had personal interactions and encounters with unusual phenomena and learn what tribal legends and oral histories have to tell us.



LEFT: Sheldon Nuñez-Velarde, Jicarilla Apache artist, relives a moment when he encountered a Bigfoot at the spot where it happened.

DAY ONE: UNDER THE MOUNTAIN

Sheldon Nuñez-Velarde is a big, friendly, openly “two-spirited” (gay) artist, renowned as a potter and beader. ¹ Before he told me about – and showed me – the places where he'd encountered Bigfoot, he introduced me to his uncle, Hoyt Velarde, a 22-year-veteran Bigfoot hunter, whose creds include a spate of TV appearances as an expert on the elusive creature. (He was lead tracker on the *Finding Bigfoot* series.) In contrast to his affable nephew, Hoyt was aggressive and challenging, informing me that while he's both educated and experienced, I was just an unqualified outsider who'd done no fieldwork stalking the mystery hominid.

He demanded that I tell him what I knew about local occurrences and people, questioned me about stories I'd heard, and wondered aloud if he should even talk to me.

Though tribal members had been told about my assignment and that many appointments had been scheduled, he threatened that, if I wrote anything, he'd deny meeting me. I calmly replied that I was not there as an authority, nor to draw conclusions or offer personal opinion. My goal was to research, interview and report only what I saw and was told. Satisfied, Hoyt's façade cracked and he admitted he'd been testing me. (For what reason,

“I bait him with apples, chicken, donuts and Vienna sausages...”



ABOVE: Archuleta Mesa rises over the New Mexico town of Dulce, in the heart of the Jicarilla Apache Nation. **BELOW:** Bigfoot tracker Hoyt Velarde has been an eyewitness to both the legendary cryptid and UFOs.

I still don't know. It's not like I was trying to become Apache.) Then he opened up not only about Bigfoot but also about the other subject of the conference: UFOs. "We've got a word for them, *yatah-naht'ai*," he began. "It means 'thing that flies in the sky.'"

As a retired law enforcement officer whose beat had been the entire reservation, he doubted that there's something nefarious going on *inside* neighbouring Archuleta Mesa. "They don't understand what 'under the mountain' means," he said, waving his hands around to indicate the town where most of the Jicarilla Apache live and the nearby lands at the foot of the imposing butte. "I've been all over that mountain, looking [for the hidden base]. Call me with any information about Archuleta Mesa and I'll go with you! Nobody calls." But, even though he discounts stories of covert activities within the imposing rock formation, that doesn't mean he didn't have a close encounter. He claimed that, while working with Paul Bennewitz,² the storied UFO researcher credited with introducing the concept of the vast underground base at Dulce, he found a futuristic, unmanned aircraft, which was "probably ours". Returning to the site the next day, he found that the ship was gone and "there were tracks of military boots and tires all over". He has seen many unexplained aerial objects since that time; but his overriding obsession is Bigfoot.



"He's an individual," claimed Hoyt, returning to his principal subject, "who is smart. [In the woods] he knows you're there and is watching you."

If the creature (we'll stay with Hoyt's choice of a singular to stand in for various members of the putative species) is so wary, how it that he's been able to successfully stalk him, I asked.

"I bait him with apples, chicken, donuts, Vienna sausage, horse feed," he replied. When pressed about Bigfoot's natural diet, Hoyt wrinkled up his nose and said the creature is omnivorous. When desperately hungry, it can rip a full-grown deer apart, and it's drawn to human habitation by garbage ... and worse. "It will push an outhouse over and eat that up... that's why he smells so bad."

The characteristic reek is how most of the people that I met interacted with Bigfoot. More had smelled than seen him, and the creature's pungent odour had obviously made quite an impression on them. Observations and descriptions included: "stinks bad"; "like a big, dirty dog"; "sweaty"; "terrible"; "mould and dead deer"; "sulphurous and really rank"; "a cross between a billy-goat and human body odour from someone who has not taken a bath for months!"; "makes you gag and your eyes water".

In spite of the overpowering stench given off by the big creature, when hunting him Hoyt must mask his own human smell. "I use scent-killer [a hunter's camouflaging product] and baby powder when I go out 'squatchin'."

"It screams like a woman!" declared Geri Julian, describing how many tribal members first became aware of the animal. She said that her grandmother had heard it as a girl and remained frightened her



ABOVE LEFT: Etched into the “desert varnish” on a rock face, this petroglyph seems to show creatures with large feet and an enormous footprint. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Taken just last spring, a footprint cast with a pen showing relative size. **BELOW:** The obligatory blurry Bigfoot photo, and a surprise for “Little Miss Jicarilla”.

entire life. Several witnesses told me of yells, yowls, grunts and roars. Hoyt went so far as to imitate the guttural, rumbling mutters he’s heard over the years but, as for understanding the intra- and interspecies communication, “I can’t make head or tail of it.”

DAY TWO: ON THE REZ

Sheldon Nuñez-Velarde drove me to where he’d seen a Bigfoot. We left the car and walked through a picturesque, steep-walled and heavily wooded canyon, dappled with sunlight and deep shadows. It opened to a vista of distant mountains. When the incident happened, Sheldon was taking a friend to see an ancient stone ruin, but didn’t tell him the destination because “he’s Navajo and superstitious [about such places].” They spotted a large black “bear” seated behind a trashcan. Then it stood up, way up, on two feet, before vanishing into the forest in three six-foot strides.

Superstition aside, the duo scampered up a two-storey ladder and hid in the ruins before fleeing home. The following day, tracks were measured at 13in (33cm). There was another sighting in the area soon after, when trained hunter-trackers caught a glimpse of a Bigfoot; in stalking it, they were



*He’d been warned
to be indoors by
nightfall with all
the shades drawn*

quickly outdistanced and then lost sight of it when their prey effortlessly leapt around a sheer cliff face.

Like many others raised on the ‘rez’, or reservation, Sheldon had been warned to always be indoors by nightfall with all the window shades drawn. He said he no longer ventures into the forest alone by night or day.

Some tribal members described Bigfoot as “curious, like a child... peeking out from either side of a tree, which wasn’t hiding him.” Others reported outright aggressiveness: charging attacks, throwing rocks (common) and, on one occasion, rocking a truck from side-to-side in a display of territorially defensive fury.

In the course of two interviews I was told that, if you are close enough to see a Bigfoot face, “you have to consult a medicine man, because it can affect your mind”. Others said they had not heard such a thing nor do they believe it.

Throughout the interviews on the rez – and prior to arriving, when I was setting up meetings in phone conversations – I kept seeking oral histories, tribal stories, lore, art, ceremonies, and religious aspects of observations pertaining to paranormal phenomena. People either couldn’t or wouldn’t tell me anything. I thought that



ABOVE: The Paranormal Rangers – Jonathan Dover and Stanley Milford Jr. BELOW: Chuck Wade, with some of his extraterrestrial scrap.

it was perhaps a recent development or a forbidden topic. I know that many indigenous people tend to be taciturn, if not secretive, and there are many reasons why, from exploitation to persecution. A lot of locals were generous when revealing their personal stories, but links to historic chronicles were not apparent. I found a photo of a parade featuring a home-built flying saucer float from 1978, but I encountered no keeper of the past that I was able to access... with one minor exception.

Late in the day, Bryan Vigil drove me out to a rock dike to show me an ancient petroglyph, which he said was a representation of a Bigfoot footprint. He proved to be another – in old Western frontier terminology – “hostile”, bitching about his life and blaming everything on the dominant culture around him, while seeing me as either *mogani* (whitey) or a source of money. Finally, fed up and on the way back to the convention, I called him on his racism and reminded him of two factors: I was a guest and his elder. He became much more civil.

DAY THREE: PARANORMAL RANGERS

At the Dulce Base UFO Conference, local tribal presenters were joined by Anglo (white) participants who had spoken before at various paranormal conventions. One couple, Chuck and Nancy Wade, researched or collected debris from what they claimed were seven alien ‘crash sites’ throughout

FROM THE FILES OF THE PARANORMAL RANGERS

(REAL CASES FROM THE SPECIAL PROJECTS UNIT)

“THE CASE OF THE BIGFOOT TRACKS”

While on the trail, 25lb (11.34kg) boulders are suddenly thrown 135 metres at Stan and Jon.

“THE OLD MAN CASE”

A respected tribal elder reports a late-night sighting of “children” whose description matches that of aliens.

“THE ORB CASE”

No one believes a hysterical woman who claims that she was chased by glowing orbs, until Stan and Jon detect mysterious magnetic residue on her car.

“THE SATAN BUTTE CASE”

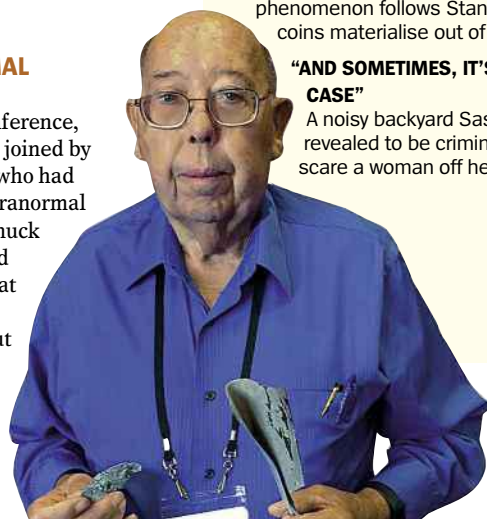
Both unexplained lights and unmarked black choppers terrify the residents of a small town.

“THE COIN CASE”

After investigating a poltergeist, the phenomenon follows Stan home, where coins materialise out of thin air.

“AND SOMETIMES, IT’S JUST A CASE”

A noisy backyard Sasquatch is revealed to be criminals trying to scare a woman off her property.



New Mexico.⁴ Chuck’s theory about the high number of downed aircraft is that “they were shot down by high-powered radar from Los Alamos” (the government laboratories where the atom bomb was born).

As I held a twisted piece of light grey material, Chuck identified it as basically aluminium overlaid with a perplexing amalgam of alloys that defied attempts to destroy or even scratch it.

There were a few outright loons in the conference mix – to be expected whenever there are more questions than answers about a topic – who presented just enough science jargon to make warp jump conclusions sound vaguely credible. They delivered their talks in a confident, self-convinced way, and were a tad hostile towards any truth which was inconvenient. When it came to discussion of other worlds, they were creating their own.

Then it was back down to Earth with the most interesting speakers of the day: the Paranormal Rangers.⁵ Stanley Milford, Jr and Jonathan Dover are Navajo Rangers, law enforcement officers charged with serving America’s largest Indian reservation (174,544,500 acres, which sprawl across three states). Dover is retired, Milford actively serves, but they travel together telling fascinating tales of their adventures, which sound like a Tony Hillerman novel by way of *The X-Files*. The duo have professionally investigated cases involving UFOs and Bigfoot, as well as hauntings, witchcraft and even skinwalkers (maleficent shape-shifters in Navajo lore, believed by many to be real (see Tea Krulos, “The Accidental Werewolf Chronicler”, FT329:38-41). Strange cases

amounted to “less than one per cent of our job,” they said, but they outlined a few of their most memorable examples.

Stan openly wonders if some paranormal activity is inter-dimensional. Jon comments: “We’ve been attacked by non-physical forms”, but hastens to add that the two Rangers “have collected evidence that could be used in court”.

The Paranormal Rangers weren’t the only Native American law enforcement officers linked to cases of paranormal activities. The late Gabe Valdez (1944-2011) is a legendary local who heavily investigated UFO incidents around Archuleta Mesa ⁶ – the purported Dulce Base – and cattle mutilations, which are rumoured by many locals to still occur.

DAY FOUR: MEET THE LOCALS

I skipped the morning’s featured presenter (Ken Johnston, a “Civilian Astronaut Consultant Pilot,” on NASA image cover-ups) in favour of more interviews with local tribal members who were UFO and/or Bigfoot

witnesses. And here is what I was told:

UFO ENCOUNTERS

Noraline Vicenti: “I see a lot of orbs... going down the line of the [Navajo] river. One actually shined a light at us and then – zoom!”

Geri (Geraldine) Julian: “I saw silent twinkle lights in the sky. One was a small triangle, another was two multi-coloured joined circles – like a pair of glasses, and a house shape.”

Sookie Vicenti: “My cat was hissing. I turned around and saw big eyes, a little nose, on a little figure, four feet tall. It was white, white, white.”

Nina Zaentz: “I’ve seen [livestock] mutilations. It wasn’t done by an animal. There was no blood. They took organs, tail, ears – like using a razor blade.”

Lorene Willis: “People don’t want to talk” for fear of ridicule or being “harassed by the military.”

BIGFOOT ENCOUNTERS

According to Hoyt Velarde, a fully-grown

Bigfoot is “about eight to nine feet in height” and, in colour, is “almost white to perfectly black”; but no bodies have been found because they’re in remote areas and “scavengers take them apart”.

Geri Julian: “I saw one with a baby. Our forefathers said that they are going to come back to us.”

Cleo Wells: “I saw a grey one with gold eyes, like an owl or a coyote.

It had yellow skin partially on its face.”

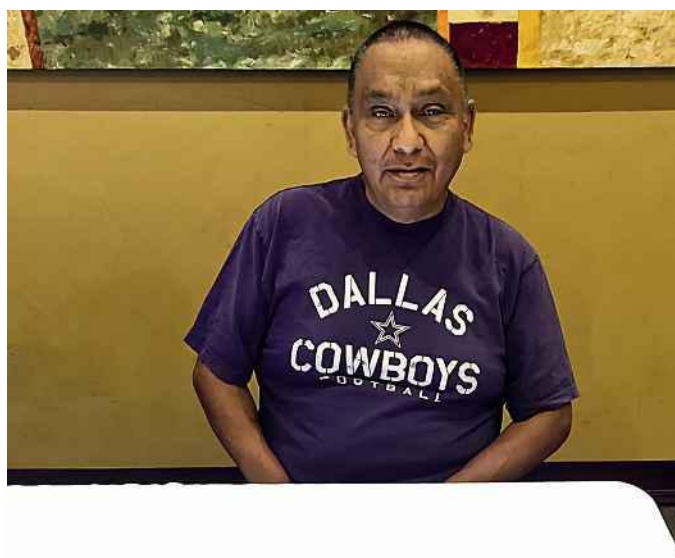
Timothy Anderson, a former police officer, has found “structures [and] nests with bones in them.”

Bryan Vigil: “I was told that they can jump on pine trees and hide. Holy Shit! Now, I look up before I look down.”

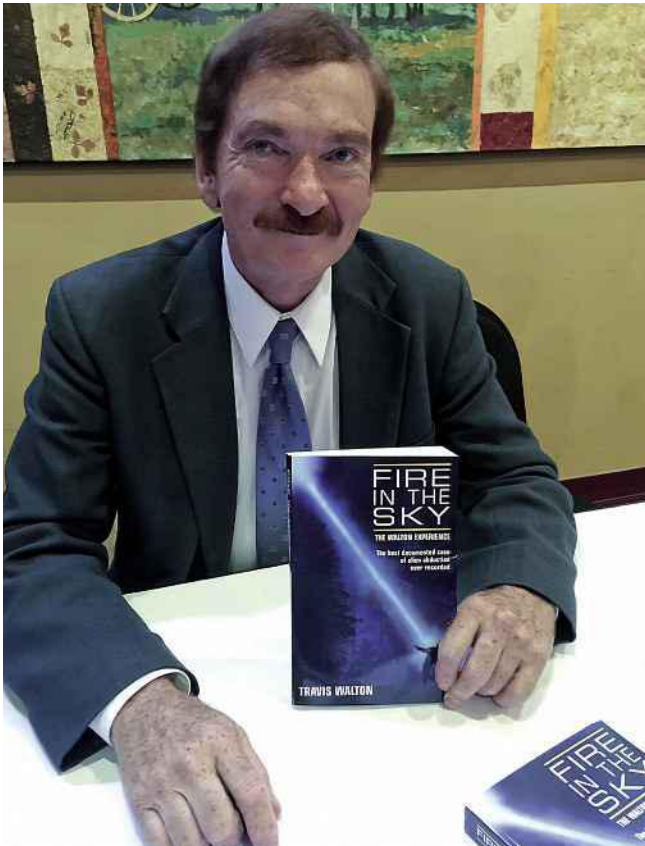
A COMBINATION OF UFO & BIGFOOT?

Tales and speculation connected the two thematic elements in stories I was told of Bigfoot instantaneously vanishing when shot at, dimensional portals, and simultaneous sightings of hovering lights and hairy hominids. Finally, I found someone who spoke about her personal encounters involving the two.

Cleo Wells, a Medicine Woman, had been warned in childhood about “a scary man who lives in the sky named ‘Gobble’”. Years



ABOVE LEFT: Medicine Woman Cleo Wells stands next to a painting of her relative, whose traditions she proudly carries on. TOP: A souvenir beaded pin made by artist Sheldon Nuñez-Verlade. ABOVE RIGHT: Timothy Anderson with some large footprint casts he had made in the spring of 2017.



ABOVE LEFT: Abductee Travis Walton spoke about his close encounter and alien visits to Earth. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Dulce Base UFO Conference Master of Ceremonies Alan Tafoya is a man of many talents: actor, singer, songwriter, and someone still fighting mad at the aliens who frightened his little brother decades ago.

later, on 16 April 1986, she was on the rez and climbing up out of a canyon when: “I felt a cool mist going all over me, like when you come out of a shower”. She could just discern a figure standing at the crest. She got to the top and followed as it appeared and disappeared in the trees. “I saw a big, hairy man with pink hands and feet... but couldn’t catch up with him.”

In a second incident, she was walking by nearby Mundo Lake when, again, a “sprinkling fog” enveloped her before she smelled and saw something “big, tall and hairy with pink elbows, hands and feet”. Again, she tried to follow the vision but the creature was too fast and eluded her.

Her most recent encounters were in March of 1997, but proved to be a be-careful-what-you-wish-for situation, when 4ft- (1.2m) tall Bigfeet turned vicious, and went on the attack, chasing Wells, her boyfriend, and her two dogs halfway down a mountain. Though she has not seen another since, the eerie mist once enshrouded her home and she subsequently discovered a large handprint and what she surmised was an enormous forehead print on her bedroom window.

Back at the conference, I found the afternoon was largely devoted to “Meet the Locals”. There they were, ready and willing to talk to attendees, after I’d spent the whole morning running around searching out the same people to interview! Their

names had not been listed in the event’s programme.

The conference ended with two celebrity guests: one was somebody in a costume (organisers delivered on their promise to “feature Bigfoot”) and the second was arguably the most famous alien abductee of all – Travis Walton. [6] Far from flogging a mutilated horse, Walton’s talk revealed that his 40-plus- year-old Close Encounter of the Worst Kind had become the basis for a life of reflection, contemplation, and carefully considered speculation. Here is a summation of the main points of his Dulce Base talk.

“We’re not alone. It’s just a fact of life.”

(Of his famed abduction) “I was injured in an accident. I was fortunate to be taken aboard and revived. At that time [1975], they’re the only ones who could have [done this].”

“I showed symptoms of extreme stress and was worried in the immediate aftermath. Nothing developed. If anything, I was having exceptional health... never called in sick in 40 years.”

“In the 1970s, the aliens put us on notice. They’re engaged in deliberate exposure. Their purpose is to get us ready. We’re a part of the galactic community, but we need to be more mature.”

“If they wanted this planet, it’d be a done deal. I believe they’re benevolent, or at least,

neutral.”

“They’re here. There are aliens here... nothing supernatural, mystical or magical about it.”

“Overall, what we’re going to find is that life forms are going to be amazingly familiar.”

Walton hinted that, in the near future, there may be another film or television version of *Fire in the Sky*, the 1993 film based on his book *The Walton Experience*.

So now I have been to my first Native American UFO & Bigfoot conference. Am I a believer? No – but I do have questions I’ve never considered before. And, if invited back, I will go, with an open mind, a seeker’s eye, and a hopeful heart.

NOTES

1 www.jicarillaapachepottery.com

2 See Christa Tilton, *The Bennewitz Papers*, Inner Light Publications 1994.

3 www.chuckwadeufo.com

4 www.youtube.com/user/TheParanormalRangers; FaceBook: ParanormalRangers

5 www.gabevaldez.com

6 www.travis-walton.com

♦♦ **PAUL ROSS** is a travel writer, photographer and videographer based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. With Judith Fein, he runs the website www.globaladventure.us.



RUSSELL KIRK PART ONE: A GHOST-TORY FOR CHRISTMAS

In the first of two parts, **SD TUCKER** summons the festive spirit of the great American conservative thinker and writer of ghost stories Russell Kirk from the grave, and discovers a timeless mind which could find debating room for both politics and poltergeists.

Late one Christmas night, long ago, a young boy settles down on a sofa in the aged home of his aged relatives, hoping to get some sleep. It is snowing heavily outside, and as the boy wraps a blanket around his slim and vulnerable frame, he may be forgiven for shivering somewhat – especially when he looks up and sees two strange-looking figures staring in at him through the downstairs window, as if seeking shelter from the storm. Should he let them in? There would be little point. They would never find relief from the frost and ice, for the cold they were feeling was not that of the winter, but of the grave; both men were dead. Their singular appearance – one tall and bearded, the other short and wearing a turban – corresponded to spooks other family members had observed flitting around the place, as the boy later discovered. His aptly-named Aunt Fay said she had seen them often, and called them ‘Patti’ and ‘Dr Cady’, though nobody really knew who precisely they were. The lad had surely been wise to pull the blanket over his head to hide from the strange figures; but true escape from their spectral influence was not so easy. Many years later, after the boy had grown into a man, his two-year-old daughter was seen waving to some invisible presence lurking around the very same ancient family home and shouting, “Hi Patti! Hi Patti!” at it, as if greeting an old friend.¹ It turned out these particular ghosts were for life, not just for Christmas.

The blanket-huddling child in question was Russell Amos Kirk (1918-1994), one of the supreme theorists of post-war American conservatism, and author of the classic 1953 book *The Conservative Mind*, a work often credited with reinvigorating a then-flagging political movement. Kirk was a learned scholar, but also an eccentric of the highest order. A conservative in the truest sense of



LEFT: Russell Kirk, looking every inch the “Bohemian Tory”.

HIS TWO-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER WAS SEEN WAVING TO A SPECTRAL PRESENCE

the term, Kirk was known for his principled denigration of such new-fangled tools of Satan as television, “electronic computers” and cars, which vile vehicles he memorably derided as “mechanical Jacobins”, believing that the mobility and independence they lent motorists facilitated the breakdown

of time-honoured communities and ways of life. Indeed, so much did he hate our modern media world that he would occasionally smash up TV sets, bury them deep underground, or throw them through windows in acts of futile revenge upon the evil electronic era in which he found himself so helplessly stranded.² When we consider that Kirk also liked to wear a cape and carry a sword-stick – and once insisted upon hiking through searing heat across North Africa whilst dressed in a full three-piece tweed suit with a typewriter on his back in order to maintain traditional old-world standards of dress and decorum³ – it would be easy for cynics to characterise this “Bohemian Tory”, as he styled himself,⁴ as merely a proto-Jacob Rees-Mogg type who deliberately, if entertainingly, failed to keep pace with modern times. However, who cares about today’s fleeting fashions when, as upon that fateful snowstorm-

haunted Christmas night long ago, you’ve already been granted a tangible glimpse of the eternal?

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Much of Kirk’s living was made by the pen, with most of his ink being spilled upon topics relating to conservatism, religion and literature – and, whenever he got the chance, all three at once. He also wrote speeches and provided counsel for the extremely conservative Republican Senator Barry ‘In Your Guts, You Know He’s Nuts’ Goldwater, best remembered for his doomed 1964 Presidential campaign. To the general public, though, Kirk was best known for his profitable sideline in writing Gothic fiction and ghost stories, many of which were really vehicles for spreading his own political philosophy in disguised narrative form.

As well as winning awards and providing short stories for such periodicals as *London Mystery Magazine* and *Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Kirk at one time shared a publisher with HP Lovecraft and an agent with Stephen King, who counted himself a fan.

Kirk's biggest commercial success came with his 1961 novel *Old House of Fear*, which, selling over 100,000 copies, helped relaunch Gothic horror as a viable genre in the post-war world – much to King's later gratitude, no doubt.⁵ A tale of occult adventure set in the remote Scottish countryside, the novel's uncanny atmosphere derives in part from real-life travels Kirk had made across Scotland and its isles in the 1950s, when he had greedily sought out snippets of local folklore. His 1956 travel essay "Eigg, in the Hebrides", for instance, featured accounts gleaned straight from islanders of people being stopped dead in their tracks by invisible supernatural barriers, or encountering fairies in the shape of giant lizards busily stealing milk from cows' udders (seek it out, David Icke).⁶

One of the villains in *The Old House of Fear*, Captain Gair, was based upon a Scots spirit – or possibly fairy – Kirk claimed to have met himself one misty day: a "little man" dressed bizarrely in an old-fashioned riding habit, with ruddy-red face and "tiny black eyes" who suddenly approached him and began asking a series of weird questions for no apparent reason before vanishing back into the Scottish mists. No locals had ever heard of this supposed 'Captain', so Kirk romanticised the encounter into an impromptu Q&A-session with a spook.⁷

Kirk, unlike some rival masters of horror, genuinely believed in ghosts. He had to. He had seen, lived with and talked with them. He had even occasionally touched them. As a committed Catholic convert, Kirk believed he was a sort of ghost himself, an immortal soul temporarily trapped within the body's fleshly bonds; he wrote spooky stories, he explained "partly to remind you and myself that we are spirits in prison."⁸ This sounds more Gnostic than Catholic, but a belief in the supernatural, Kirk felt, often led to a corresponding belief in God. A widespread lack of belief in ghosts was simply another indication of the unnatural, dust-dry rationalism of a fallen modern age dominated by false materialist ideologies of all kinds, from scientism to liberalism to Communism. It is entirely typical of the man that, when he lay dying from heart-failure in 1994, Kirk claimed the soul of the Catholic



LEFT: Kirk's spook-ridden family home, Piety Hill, was rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1976.

BELOW: *Old House of Fear* was a commercial success that helped revive Gothic horror as a popular genre.

mystic Padre Pio had visited him and instigated an in-depth theological discussion on his deathbed.⁹ For Kirk, belief in God and ghosts went together.

ANCESTRAL SPIRITS

Kirk had been raised amongst Spiritualists and Swedenborgians in Mecosta County, Michigan, being primed since childhood to accept all kinds of supernatural events as part of family folklore. His great-grandmother, Estelle Johnson – a woman of obvious Puritan descent, "immaculate and erect and queenly in long-black dress and high-buttoned black shoes" – would "retire to her room to talk to the dead" as if this was a perfectly normal way to spend an evening, said Kirk.¹⁰ She also allegedly had the ability to levitate, and the Kirk family home, known as Piety Hill, was filled with tales of self-playing fiddles, floating furniture, and strange apparitions; it was at Piety Hill that he saw his first ghosts that strange and snow-swept Christmas night.

In many ways the sighting of Patti and Dr Cady was the central event in Kirk's life, the one which first set him off on his political and spiritual quest to recapture the past. The Kirk family passed down its spooks from generation to generation like cherished antique heirlooms. His father's home in Baldwin, Michigan, wrote Kirk, was haunted by an unseen spirit christened 'Herman',

which apparently "tramps up and down the stairs in the middle of the day, invisibly, and makes noises like the dragging of heavy furniture upstairs"; phenomena which "caused little inconvenience" to ghost-lovers like himself.¹¹

In 1948 Kirk temporarily left America, settling in Scotland to spend some agreeable years as a graduate student. Here, as well as writing the thesis later to become *The Conservative Mind*, he encountered ghosts and ghouls aplenty. The lodging-house where he stayed was apparently inhabited by the shade of a "dear, sweet old lady" who would wake him up in the wee small hours by blundering around the place "like a soul most literally lost", knocking things over. Once, she grasped Kirk's hand through the bedclothes with a distinctly corporeal-seeming hand of her own; as once before in childhood, he pulled his head beneath the covers until she had gone.¹² Kirk became a real amateur ghost-hunter whilst residing on these shores, something he later used a syndicated national US newspaper column, *To the Point*, to tell the great American public about. No doubt his millions of readers were surprised to find the intellectual godfather of post-war American conservatism eagerly describing the poltergeist he had once stalked in "an old house of Chelsea", which "specialised in taking the bread out of the breadbox, nocturnally, and shoving it under the kitchen radiator" and pulling the household toilet-chain in the middle of the night,¹³ but Kirk was a man who would disrupt his own academic conferences by deciding to tell ghost stories to the assembled guests, so such columns would not have surprised those who knew him best.¹⁴



AMERICAN GOTHIC

Kirk claimed he had a Gothic mind, a realisation which, he explained in 1963, had its origins in the fact he despised the cold harmony and perfect regularity of organisation of Enlightenment-influenced thinkers who felt that society was something which should be planned logically, rather than allowed to grow organically. His was a mind “mediæval in its temper”, which sought “variety, mystery, tradition, the venerable, the awful... I would have given any number of neo-classical pediments for one poor battered gargoyle”. During his own day, godless Enlightenment thinking still held sway over governments of all stripes, Kirk felt, with bureaucrats and central planners plotting to impose “a dreary conformity upon all the world, with Efficiency and Progress and Equality for their watchwords – [false] abstractions preferred to all those fascinating and lovable peculiarities of human nature and human society which are the products of prescription and tradition”.¹⁵ If one of his stories features both a demon and a bureaucrat, then you can bet it is the latter who represents the true forces of evil. Several of his short stories seem little more than narrative-based restatements of his admirer Ronald Reagan’s quip that “the nine most terrifying words in the English language are: ‘I’m from the government, and I’m here to help’”.¹⁶

Kirk’s very first published story, *Behind the Stumps*, tells of the horrible witch-related fate which awaits an overly-officious census-taker who pries too closely into the affairs of a backwoods American family, while his 1957 yarn *Ex Tenebris* describes the divine punishment of an insensitive social-worker who is throttled to death in a graveyard by an undead vicar for the sin of trying to evict an old woman into faceless state-subsidised sheltered accommodation in the name of ‘progress’.¹⁷

The idea of strangling public-sector employees to death in churchyards was not the only conservative message Kirk put into his fiction. Whilst visiting York in 1949, he had sped by “a short street of handsome neat houses”, which he thought dated from the Georgian or Queen Anne eras, whilst hurrying to catch a train. Returning to York some time later, he searched in vain for the street again. However, no matter how hard he looked, it was nowhere to be found... because it had been demolished in 1914. Apparently, Kirk had experienced a time-slip.¹⁸ In 1976, he was to transform this real-life paranormal experience into fiction with his short story *Saviourgate*, in which a potentially suicidal man with a train to catch (or throw himself under) rushes into a pub which, it later transpires, had already been destroyed by Nazi fire-bombs some time earlier. The suicidal traveller has slipped into a realm existing

outside of time, where, by the grace of God, he is forgiven his sins and redeemed; and that, it turns out, was the fate Russell Kirk wished to befall as many of the electorate as possible. Saving the world from time by promoting belief in ghosts is an unusual programme for politics, admittedly, but it is one Kirk felt had a surprisingly large force of history behind it. “Every Tory is a realist,” he once declared. “He knows that there are great forces in Heaven and Earth that man’s philosophy cannot plumb or fathom.”¹⁹ Maybe so; but is it really possible to *vote* for such fathomless supernatural forces?

A CONSERVATIVE REVOLUTION

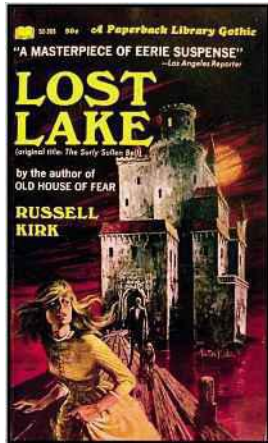
Kirk’s solution to the unpleasant mistake of political modernity was, paradoxically, every bit as achievable as it was impractical: to resurrect the dead by abolishing all sense of time itself. Granted, this *sounds* impossible, but Kirk had already encountered the ghosts of Christmas past, and spent much of his subsequent life seeking to repeat the experience. Prior to his apparitional time-slip of 1949, Kirk had undergone a more mystical and subjective adventure in time whilst watching an Anglican friend conduct Evensong in an otherwise empty church, during which he had suddenly sensed the presence of “the eternal community of souls”, a “timeless moment” in which he had felt



ABOVE LEFT: Edmund Burke’s nightmare of revolution spreading to Britain in a Gilray cartoon entitled ‘Promis’d Horrors of the French Invasion, or Forcible Reasons for Negotiating a Regicide Peace’; Burke himself is seen being tossed by a bull representing the Duke of Bedford. ABOVE RIGHT: Burke in an engraved portrait, c. 1770.

supernaturally connected to all Christianity and Christians from past, present and future.²⁰ Perceiving the way such ageless truths and experiences had been utterly forgotten by the materialist ideologies of the modern world, he made it his lifelong quest to conjure up the spirit of one particular political thinker from a bygone age in order to remedy this sad fact – the great Anglo-Irish Tory thinker and statesman of the 18th century, Edmund Burke (1729-1797).

Burke's best, most influential work was his 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France*; it was with this book that the philosophy we now call 'conservatism' is often said to have truly begun. Looking across the Channel with horror at the bloodshed and destruction of the French Revolution of 1789, Burke tried to warn Britain not to make the same mistakes. According to Burke, the people of England had historic rights and liberties which constituted "an entailed inheritance derived to us from our forefathers and to be transmitted to our posterity". The English possessed "an inheritable crown; an inheritable peerage; and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises and liberties, from a long line of ancestors". To rip all this up in the name of the self-contradictory



Enlightenment principles of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, as the French had just done, would be to make a massive mistake, as a "spirit of innovation is generally the result of a selfish temper", in which the reformers seek first and foremost immediate benefits for themselves, instead of considering the long-term consequences of their actions for their nation. "People will not look forward to posterity," Burke says, "who never look backward to their ancestors."²¹

Revolution would follow upon revolution in a new, French-style world, without any respect for the past, writes Burke, with son turning murderously upon father: "By this unprincipled facility of changing the State as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions, the whole chain and community of the commonwealth would be broken. No one generation could link with the other. Men would become little better than the flies of a summer." Eventually, "the commonwealth itself would, in a few generations, crumble away, be disconnected into the dust and powder of individuality, and at length [be] dispersed to all the winds of heaven." Burke said that Britain's best hope of avoiding similar social dismemberment was to admit that "Society is indeed a contract", a kind of eternal bond between the generations:

"a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are [yet] to be born."²²

The ghost-loving Kirk, liking Burke's idea of true government being one that "connects the visible and invisible worlds",²³ agreed profoundly. Burke's points are still valid, one might argue: myopic contemporary politicians who beggar future generations in favour of bribing the present-day electorate with bread and circuses also risk breaking the bond between the generations and weakening the future state. Kirk found Burke's ideas echoed in the writings of the conservative English novelist GK Chesterton, who invented the phrase "the democracy of the dead", an idea Kirk summed up thus: "In deciding any important moral or political question... we have the obligation to consult the considered opinions of the wise men who have preceded us in time. We owe these dead an immense debt, and their ballots deserve to be counted. Thus we have no right simply to decide any question by what the momentary advantage may be to us privately."²⁴

But how to consult the dead about their opinions? As we shall see next issue, no Ouija board is necessary...

◆ SD TUCKER writes regularly for FT, and is the author of several books, including *Space Oddities*, *Forgotten Science*, *The Hidden Folk*, *Terror of the Tokoloshe*, *Great British Eccentrics* and *Paranormal Merseyside*. He'd dare say they would all make ideal Christmas presents for the Russell Kirk in your life.

NOTES

General information about Kirk is taken from an excellent recent biography: Bradley J Birzer, *Russell Kirk: American Conservative*, University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Unreferenced general points about Kirk's ghosts and ghostly fiction are taken from Chapter 8: 'Ghosts in the Machine... and the House' (pp283-323). An edited version of this chapter is online at <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2015/06/russell-kirk-and-the-haunting-of-piety-hill.html>

1 John M Pafford, *Russell Kirk*, Bloomsbury, 2013, ch2 (accessed online). Dr Cady later made an appearance as a 'doctor of the paranormal' in Kirk's short-story *The Princess of All Lands*, which was in itself based upon a true-life incident involving a kidnap attempt which had been made upon Kirk's wife Annette by a feral, female gun-wielding teen who wished to present her to her drunken 'daddy' as a birthday present;

see www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/sep/11/20040911-110008-6887r/?page=all

2 Birzer, pp402-403; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russell_Kirk.

3 www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2014/12/russell-kirk-citizen-world.html.

4 As in the title of his 1963 book *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*. 'Tory' in Kirk's usage must be taken as simply meaning 'conservative' in general, there obviously being no Tory Party in the US.

5 Birzer, p290

6 Russell Kirk, "Eigg, in the Hebrides" in George A Panichas (ed.), *The Essential Russell Kirk*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2012, p314.

7 Birzer, p288.

8 Birzer, p293.

9 Birzer, p392; Kirk also had something of an obsession with the Turin Shroud.

10 Russell Kirk, "An Old House

Dies with Love and Honour", *To the Point* column, 1975; online at <http://www.theimaginativeconservative.org/2013/04/russell-kirk-an-old-house-dies-with-love-and-honour.html>

11 Russell Kirk, "Racketing Spirits", *To the Point* column, 1966; online at <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1955&dat=19660210&id=2SErAAAAIAJ&sjid=mZOFAAAAIAJ&pg=4117,4278651&hl=en>

12 Birzer, p93.

13 Kirk, 'Racketing Spirits'.

14 www.nationalreview.com/node/215817/print.

15 Russell Kirk, "Confessions of a Gothic Mind" in Panichas, p299.

16 The Reagan administration toyed with the idea of appointing Kirk as US Ambassador to London – if only!

17 What fictional use would Kirk have made of the modern-day Phantom Social Worker phenomenon, I wonder?

18 Birzer, p296.

19 www.nationalreview.com/node/215817/print.

20 Birzer, pp289, 296.

21 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Oxford World's Classics, 1999, p33.

22 Burke, pp87-88.

23 Burke, p97; Kirk's love of the 'Gothic sensibility' has also sometimes been linked back to the influence of another of Burke's essays, namely 1757's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

24 Russell Kirk, 'The Moral Imagination' in Panichas, p230; Or, as Chesterton himself put it: "All democrats object to men being disqualified [from the democratic process] by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death."

Essential reading from Policy Press

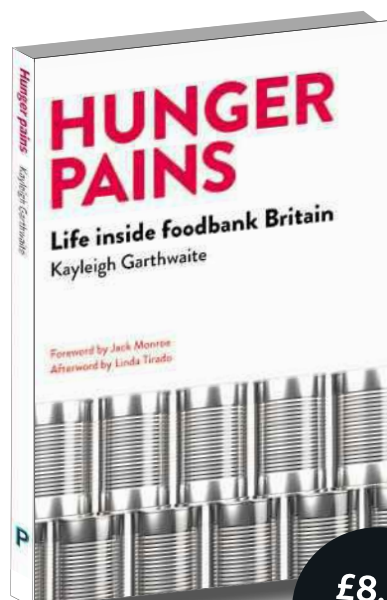


PB £9.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3924-3
EPUB £6.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3926-7

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£5.99

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*

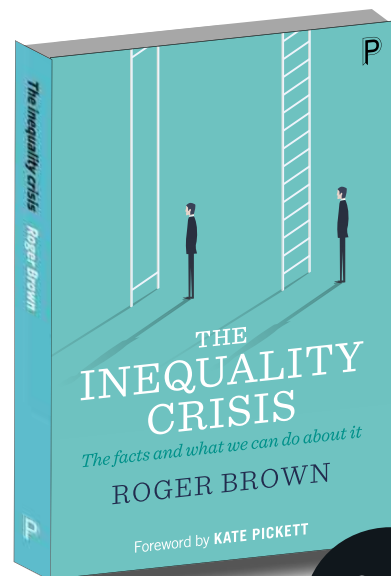


PB £14.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2911-4
EPUB £9.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2913-8

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£8.99

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*

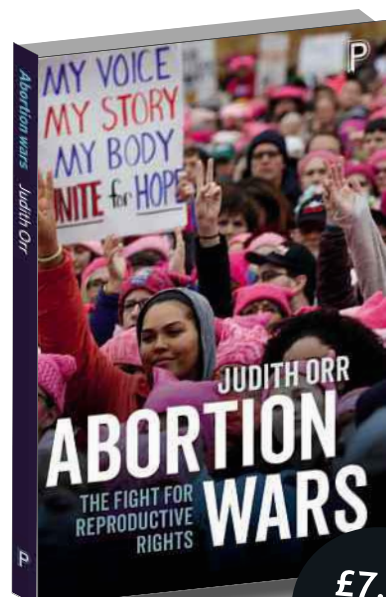


PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3758-4
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3760-7

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£7.79

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*

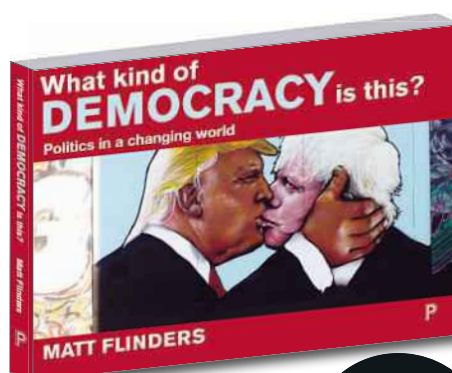


PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3911-3
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3913-7

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£7.79

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*



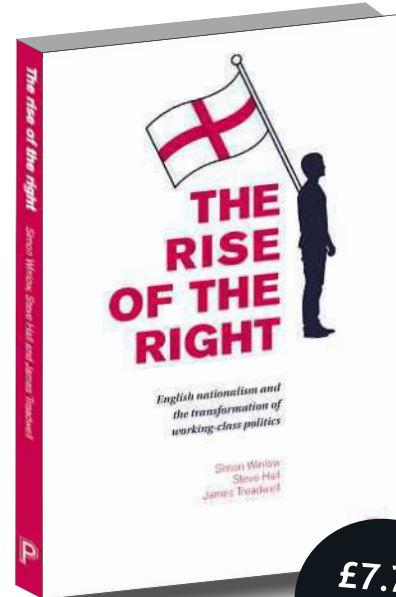
PB £19.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3762-1
EPUB £22.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-3992-2

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£11.99

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*

"Unusual, accessible and innovative." David Blunkett



PB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2848-3
EPUB £12.99 ISBN 978-1-4473-2851-3

Available on [amazon kindle](#)

£7.79

FOR BIG ISSUE
READERS*

P Policy Press
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

A LEADING SOCIAL SCIENCE PUBLISHER COMMITTED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Order from www.policypress.co.uk before 30 September 17 and use code POBIG17 at the checkout

Follow us on [f](#) and [t](#) Sign up for our newsletter and receive 35% off all books



The Kindness of Strangers

MATT SALUSBURY
wonders if that's the
Ghost of Christmas Past
he sees clutching a large
wad of cash to dispense
to random passers-by...

Tis the season for giving, with professional fundraisers and chuggers rattling their collecting tins, whether virtual or in the physical universe. At this time of year, it's worth noting that delinquent altruism ain't what it used to be...

Delinquent altruism? Older *FT* readers will recall regular round-ups, from the days when cash was king, featuring the phenomenon of random strangers who handed out banknotes indiscriminately to bystanders in the street.

Back in 2003, for example, a man who wanted to share his stock market winnings emptied just under US \$10,000-worth of banknotes from shopping bags into the streets of Nagoya, Japan. He reportedly said: "I have too much money. I don't need it." (*Times of India*, 24 Dec 2003.)

Some mystery benefactors used other methods – such as the woman seen posting at least £600 in £20 notes through letterboxes in Ramsgate, with notes saying "a gift to you". (*Eve Standard*, 4 Apr 2001, **FT153:20**.) Others slipped banknotes under motorists' windscreen wipers. New London, Connecticut, resident Felix Pope was among those who found a \$20 bill that way one morning in April 2000; all the other cars in the street had them under their wipers too. (**FT153:20**.) The practice was still going strong in Christmas 2005 in Birmingham, where a "Secret Santa" paid parking tickets, leaving cash with Christmas cards under windscreen wipers along with the penalty notices issued. (*Metro*, 21 Dec 2005). A more inventive mystery

benefactor threw wads of Italian lira out of a light aircraft over a busy square in Rome in 1977. (*Reveille*, 7 Jan 1977.)

An elderly, smartly dressed man in a trilby known as 'Goldfinger' left at least £18,000 in gold sovereigns in Portsmouth gardens in 1992. Much of it was handed in to Hampshire Police. They tracked 'Goldfinger' down, interviewed him and decided he'd obtained his money honestly, was of sound mind and at liberty to give it away. (*The News* [Portsmouth], 4+8+24+28 Oct 1991.) The "Good Samaritan" of Rochester, New York, wore a cape and a black hat with a plume as he handed out one \$100 bill to each passer-by in June 1987. He reportedly said he had tried giving out money dressed in ordinary clothes, but people had been too scared to take it. (**FT59:38**.) A mystery man in a ski-mask and a three-piece suit experienced similar difficulty giving away money to puzzled bystanders in McCook, Nebraska, in 1986. (*Houston Chronicle*, 30 Nov 1986); and it was a "smartly-dressed man" who handed out at least a grand in fivers to passers-by in Keighley, Yorkshire in 2002. (**FT166:14**.)

More sinister was "The Riddler" a middle-aged man in glasses and a suit giving away at least a new £10 note in "prizes" to any child in the parks of Benfleet, Essex, who could answer his cryptic riddles. Last seen in 1987, he'd been active for many years, eluding police after a chase through woodland. (**FT59:38**.)

I've kept an eye on delinquent altruism since I found myself involved in the "Free Shop", an anti-capitalist stunt in London's Oxford Street just before Christmas 2003. It was a help-yourself second-hand shop where everything was given away. I was perturbed to find two photographers from the Met's Forward Intelligence Team photographing me, although



Constable DM 603, who came along from Marylebone nick, did tell us: "Very well done."

Since that golden age of random strangers handing out money in the street, the practice seems to have declined. This is partly down to enforcement by the likes of the British Transport Police, whose Chief Inspector David Dickson was telling Londoners as of 2004 that they were fuelling the capital's drug trade if they so much as gave away their unwanted one-day Travelcards in Underground stations. (*Metro*, 1 Mar 2004.)

Like a lot of phenomena that were once cool, the act of showering random bystanders with gifts has become increasingly commodified. Examples from recent years have the whiff of a gone-wrong marketing stunt about them. A case in point was the "cash mob" – the rain of banknotes leading to a stampede in London's Covent Garden in September 2006. The people throwing a grand's worth of fivers into the air turned out to be winners of a competition to advertise the show *Brotherhood* on the FX TV channel. The victors won the right to throw a grand in the air and keep as much as they could catch. (*London Lite*, 28 Sept 2006.) The latest "random acts of kindness" sensation was the Hidden Cash Guy, who led many a local resident on "scavenger hunts" through clues via the Twitter handle @HiddenCash to

LEFT: An identikit of 'Goldfinger' circulated by Hampshire Police in 1992.

envelopes (or Pez dispensers, or Angry Birds toys) stuffed with \$50-\$100. These had been left mostly in public parks across San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and other US cities throughout 2015, after which they ceased. Hidden Cash Guy was outed as real estate investor Jason Buzi, together with an associate. (*Huffington Post*, 10 June 2014.)

Random acts of kindness today seem, well, a little less random. Take Kindness Week, in which primary school children are encouraged by their teachers to do "random" like dropping off biscuits in decorated boxes in doorsteps around their village. Benhall Primary School in Suffolk was one of many institutions exhibiting such behaviour with the blessing of their deputy headteacher in 2015. (*East Anglian Daily Times*, 10 Mar 2015.)

But wait! People may not randomly throw cash around in the street anymore, but subversive giving is alive and well thanks to the wonders of web platform-based crowdfunding. Recent high-profile examples include successful industrial tribunal cases brought by "precarious workers" including cycle couriers, university cleaners and Deliveroo riders organised as the Independent Workers of Great Britain. Previously way beyond their budget, these legal actions are now crowdfunded within hours of launching. Giving out money in the street seems to have been replaced by mass donations that give a two-fingered salute to authority by supporting underdogs in otherwise impossible struggles.

♦♦ **MATT SALUSBURY** is a freelance journalist and *FT* regular. His book *Mystery Animals of the British Isles: Suffolk is out soon* from CFZ Publishing.

Fortunately, many of Fort's own letters survive, including those published in newspapers. The fortean scholar, Mr X (his legal name), recovered two of these, now published on his website.⁴ A

light in touch as the other books, it testifies to Fort's continued interest in the superlunary realm. It's that same theme that flows through these letters, as their titles indicate.

The proximity of tangible worlds in space, close enough for interplanetary transit, sets up Fort's headlining claim. Invoking Georges Méliès classic 1902 film, *Le Voyage dans la Lune*, cannonry is the preferred mode of travel. Since there are other worlds nearby, suggested Fort, "the idea that... projectiles, with messages inscribed upon them, may have been fired to this earth is losing its preposterousness". Attacks on the alleged vastness of space were a theme of *New Lands*, there attributed to the exaggerations of astronomers. If astronomical distances are not measured in millions of miles, and there are nearby worlds, then the idea of their inhabitants firing messages to our world starts "losing its preposterousness". In true fortaean style, the claim isn't that such assertions gain





credibility – only that certain of the reasons for regarding them as preposterous are removed. Interplanetary ballistics as a form of messaging might still be preposterous, but not because of the vast distances involved.

By itself, the bare possibility of interplanetary messaging is just that – a bare possibility. But Fort goes one better, citing cases of manufactured objects and carved stones that fell from the sky. In 1887, a little carved, ice-covered stone fell at Tarbes, France. Its presence was attributed to a whirlwind, despite the absence of reports of any at the time. Four years earlier, in New York, a “luminous object” fell one April night, and later some searchers found a “an object like a two-handled sword”, almost 6ft (1.8m) feet long, “covered with hieroglyphs”. A local antiquarian dismissed it as a hoax, since it was evidently “made by someone who had never seen a real, ancient, two-handled sword”. In typically laconic manner, Fort explained that was precisely the interest of the object. Unfortunately, since ‘Exclusionist Science’ had spoken, no further details were available, so Fort ends with a plea for information from readers. If the object was a decipherable message from another world, “there is no knowing what developments may follow”.

Evidently someone replied. A sequel, ‘Meteors as Messengers’, appeared the following October, since, as Fort explained, several of his correspondents asked to be kept up to date.⁸ Getting straight to it, Fort recaps his thesis that “there have been attempts in other physical worlds to communicate with the inhabitants of this earth”. Data follows on three cases of spherical iron objects, all from England, each explained conventionally – that the objects did not *fall* from the sky, but were on the ground all along. Fort rebuts several of these explanations, pointing out how unlikely it is not to notice unusual iron spheres lying around in one’s garden or farm. Instead, why not consider the possibility of their being “shot, perhaps in volleys, from some other world in an

METEORS AS MESSENGERS

English Investigator Gives Some Further Data, Supporting His View That Other Worlds Have Sought to Communicate With Us

To the Editor of The New York Times:

A letter of mine, published in THE TIMES on Aug. 31, 1924, upon data which indicate that there have been attempts in other physical worlds to communicate with the inhabitants of this earth, brought so many replies from places as far apart as Lovelock, Nev., and Middlesex, England, that I have reason for thinking there is considerable interest in this subject. Some of my correspondents asked me to keep them in touch with such developments.

There has been an occurrence in England. It may be an additional datum in this investigation.

In THE LONDON EVENING STANDARD of Sept. 25 was published an account of a spherical iron object, not a meteorite, which was said to have fallen from the sky on Sept. 22, during a thunderstorm, at a point near the British Broadcasting station at Bourne-mouth, Hampshire. In investigating this reported occurrence I have received a description from L. Byerett, a member of the staff of the station, 72 Holdenhurst Road, Bourne-mouth. He writes:

“It consists of cast iron and is the size and shape of a small cricket ball, but exactly midway between the two halves of the sphere there is a mark which seems to indicate that this is a casting, the mark denoting the joint in the box. Also, on top there is a flat portion of crystalline structure, which points to where the runner or riser was cut off by the fettlers after casting. It seems to me that the whole thing is a matter of coincidence, this object being found only two feet six inches deep.”

The objection that something that had fallen from the sky would probably penetrate deeper than several feet is not supported by data upon meteorites. Sometimes meteorites have struck the ground with very little penetration; the stones that fell at Hessel, Sweden, Jan. 1, 1899, alighted upon a frozen lake without breaking the ice. As to coincidence, Mr. Byerett expressed the conventional explanation that only by chance had lightning struck and dug a hole where an iron object was buried. Other explainers would say that a buried iron had attracted lightning.

But there have been other instances. Some of them will not conform to this way of dismissing a subject. In THE LONDON TIMES of Sept. 16, 1892, was published a letter by a chemist of Andover, Hampshire, telling of an iron sphere, about the size of a cricket ball, which had been found in a garden in Andover after a thunderstorm. It was found on a path, “within six yards of the house.” Presumably it had not been in that garden, unnoticed, for any long time.

In Symonds’s Meteorological Magazine,

Vol. XVIII, Page 57, J. Hans Caproni, the astronomer, tells of a sphere of iron that was found after a thunderstorm in Guilford, near London, in April, 1893, in a heap of refuse bark that had been thrown from a stable. The object, found at the bottom of a hole that had been burned ten inches deep in this heap, it was a charcoal-melted cast-iron ball, probably of considerable antiquity, as charcoal furnaces have long ceased to exist.

Mr. Caproni explained in the conventional way that this sphere, thrown from the stable, never having been noticed upon the premises before, had probably attracted lightning, which had burned down to it. If, more likely, it would have been noticed if it had been there before, one thinks that this object fell from the sky, intensely heated, burning its way through the refuse. I notice that this object, though of cast iron, had been manufactured by a process not prevailing in England.

Unless lightning has some special affinity for cast-iron spheres of use and origin unknown, our data indicate that manufactured objects, all of one type in form and composition, have fallen from the sky, shot, perhaps in volleys, from some other world in an attempt to communicate with us. My own idea is that projectiles from some other inhabited world have reached a region superjacent to this earth, in which, despite all that we think we know of gravitation, this earth’s attraction is ineffective, and have been dislodged and brought down by atmospheric disturbances. For the idea that they may be containers of messages I have no data.

There is another way of arguing against the lightning explanation. Stones do not attract lightning. I have several dozen records of carved stones which are said to have fallen from the sky, sometimes in thunderstorms. For a reproduction of a photograph of a stone cylinder said to have fallen at Westerville, Ohio, late in the year 1910, see Popular Mechanics, XIV, 891. In Notes and Queries, Feb. 8, 1892, is an account of a carved stone which was said to have fallen from the sky to a plantation in Dutch Guiana, whence it was sent to a museum in Holland. The Conservator of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum, Leyden, Holland, sent me two photographs of this stone. It is clearly an artificially rounded object.

I should like to hear from anybody who is interested in this investigation. We may be able to take it up and unearth more data in the United States.

CHARLES FORT.
38(A) Marchmont Street, W. C., London, England, Oct. 2, 1925.

are not known to have survived.

A final letter appeared in September 1926, ahead of Mars’s opposition, under the title ‘Have Martians visited us?’⁹ It pulls no punches, declaring that “Martians have probably often visited this earth”. Mysterious lights seen on that planet are likely signals to their own ships, rather than messages to us. No longer are Martians trying to contact us, they’re now here, at large on (or, rather, over) our world.

The obvious question, says Fort, is why they don’t land in Central Park – waving crowds, “monstrous

parade down Broadway, historic turn-out.”

Most of the letter explores possible reasons for the reticence of our regular Martian visitors. Perhaps they are austere, averse to the sensation they would incite. Perhaps they’re suspicious of how we’d likely react to them, boozy and brawling as we are. Fort’s preferred explanation, however, was more sinister: “For ages Martians may have been in communication with this earth and have, in some occult way, been in control of its inhabitants.” Insidious extraterrestrial influence was, of course, a familiar theme for Fort. As well as the portentous speculation in *The Book of the Damned* – “I think we’re property” – it was the theme of his earlier, now lost book, *X*, whose titular subject was a

power or intelligence that existed on Mars, controlling Earth from afar.¹⁰

The *New York Times* letters only tease these evocative ideas, since Fort’s concern was to offer some data and solicit more from readers. Reading them, it’s easy to dismiss them as the classic offerings of a crank, not least given the punchier, assertive tone. But, as careful *FT* readers know, Fort was anything but a crank. The letters show his typical intellectual style: take a wild hypothesis, find data to support it, show the absurdity of attempted ‘explanations’, then sit back and see what happens. Fort was *curious* – about carved stones that fall during storms, lights on Mars, and the rest – but also *playful*, turning ‘damned data’ into imaginative collages. Letters to newspapers were means of satisfying the curiosity by getting more data, and of inviting others to play along. I’d invite other *Fortean Times* readers to search for any other of his letters and to make publicly available any they have.

1 *New Lands*, ch.1.

2 A letter by Fort, quoted by Jim Steinmeyer, *Charles Fort: The Man Who Invented the Supernatural* (New York, Tarcher, 2008), p210.

3 Some of the surviving letters are in the Tiffany Thayer Papers at the New York Public Library.

4 See www.resoligist.net/corres00.htm.

5 Ian James Kidd, ‘Fort letter rediscovered’, *Fortean Times* 226:57 (Aug 2007).

6 Charles Hoy Fort, ‘Visitors of other worlds’, 31 Aug 1924.

7 Florence Raulin-Cerceau, ‘The pioneers of interplanetary communication: From Gauss to Tesla’, *Acta Astronautica* 67 (2010), pp1391-1398.

8 Charles Hoy Fort, ‘Meteors as messengers’, 18 Oct 1925.

9 Charles Hoy Fort, ‘Have Martians visited us? British observer argues in the affirmative and seeks news of future manifestations’, 5 Sept 1926.

10 *The Book of the Damned*, ch.12. *X* is discussed in Jim Steinmeyer, *Charles Fort*, ch.10.

◆ IAN JAMES KIDD is a philosopher at the University of Nottingham with a longstanding interest in Fort’s life and work. His website is <https://sites.google.com/site/df12ijk/>

“Projectiles with messages upon them may have been fired to this Earth”

attempt to communicate”. Maybe some bear hieroglyphs, like the New York sword-object, while others are hollow, containing some kind of message. A new sort of evidence, offered by correspondents, are photographs of similar objects – of carved stones reported to have fallen during storms, including one sent to Fort by the conservator of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum of Leiden. Sadly, the photographs

Twenty Years of 'Myths Over Miami'

IAN SIMMONS wonders what happened to the strange children's mythology uncovered by journalist Linda Edwards

Publicity surrounding the recently released film *The Florida Project*,¹ which focuses on the precarious lives of children living in scruffy motels around Disney World, set me thinking about an extraordinary tale that emerged from similar circumstances 20 years ago.

In June 1997, journalist Linda Edwards published a story in the *Miami New Times* under the title "Myths Over Miami"² in which she recounted a series of vivid tales she had heard from children very similar to those in *The Florida Project*. The kids in the film, drifting through an endless succession of temporary residences in decaying motel rooms rented by the day, are just a moment's misfortune away from the homeless shelters in which Edwards found the children she interviewed, whom she claimed possessed a surprisingly consistent secret mythology. Edwards claimed that this mythology was shared among homeless children, aged mostly under 10, not just in Miami, but right across the US, quoting examples from as far away as Chicago and Oakland, California. Passed on orally by children telling each other stories when they gathered in the shelters, it was a rich and strange brew, fraught with horror and imminent danger, along with rituals and beliefs to summon, contain and defend against demonic forces; and it was quite unlike anything anyone had ever come across before.

According to Edwards, these children believed that on Christmas night a year before, demons had invaded Heaven, shattering God's palace of blue-



LEFT: Homeless street kids in *The Florida Project* whose lives resemble those of Linda Edwards's interviewees.

moon marble and causing him to flee, never to return. Only the angels remained to defend what was left of Heaven, and the Earth, from demonic assault. This disaster was kept secret from the rest of the world, but the homeless children were alerted to it when awakened by dead relatives who passed on the news. As a result of God's disappearance, demons found 'gateways' to the human world – which the children believe include abandoned fridges, Jeep Cherokees with blacked out windows and 'Ghost Town', a cemetery in Dade County – through which they come to feed on human jealousy, hate and fear.

Satan, they believed, had a special hatred of Miami because of a humiliation he had suffered there while hunting for gateways for his demons and emotions for them to feed on. Apparently, he fitted in well among the South Beach high rollers, despite being covered with gold and silver

scales. He found a Hellmouth under the Colony Hotel, but while bribing the owner with 10 Mercedes-Benzes, he was captured by angels and trapped under the river that runs through Miami – whereupon his skin turned deep burgundy, horns grew from his head while the river boiled and turned to blood and the ghostly screams of the children he had murdered floated up from its depths. But, the children said, he didn't stay trapped for long, and had escaped to wreak havoc once more.

Aligned against the demon army were the angels, who love Miami's plentiful neon because they nibble on its light to enable them to fly. Chief among these is the Blue Lady, who has pale skin and lives in the ocean; she cannot use her power to fight back, though, because a demonic spell means you must know her secret name for it to work – and few know that name. However, as one of Edwards's sources, a boy called Andre, asserted: "If you and

your friends are on a corner of a street when a car comes shooting bullets and only one child yells out her true name, all will be safe. Even if bullets tearing your skin, the Blue Lady makes them fall on the ground. She can talk to us, even without her name. She says: 'Hold on'." Another girl described seeing the Blue Lady, with flowers dripping from her arms, and the children's drawings often showed her shooting demons and gang members with a gun to keep the children safe.

Once they have seen a child's face, both the Blue Lady and the demons can always find them again. The same is true of the spirits. Never called ghosts, these are the returning dead, and they are intermediaries between the angels and the children, bringing them news from the battle against the demons. These spirits look exactly as they did when alive, right down to their clothes, but have a faint coloured aura around them. At first, a spirit can only move its lips without

producing sounds, but eventually, as they learn to communicate from the spirit world, they can be heard, warning and advising the children. One child spoke of his dead cousin manifesting to congratulate him on winning a shelter spelling bee, showing him a shortcut to his elementary school that avoided packs of drunks, and warning him about Satan's escape from his river prison.

In these children's stories, there was no hope of Heaven for the dead, but they did hold out the hope that their departed loved ones might make it to an angels' encampment hidden in a beautiful jungle somewhere beyond Miami. To ensure they got there, a fresh palm leaf needed to be placed on their graves to act as an entry pass. In this jungle camp, a clear river of cold, drinkable water wound among emerald palms and soft grasses, and the borders were guarded by gigantic alligators, eating trespassers but guarding the spirits of dead children while they learned to fight.

The children lived in fear of the most terrible of the demon horde, La Llorona (the Crying Woman), AKA Bloody Mary, who was also feared by the angels, and even by Satan. She wept blood or black tears from empty eye sockets and fed on children's terror. They believed that if they woke at night and saw her, they were marked for death. One girl, a 10-year-old named Otius, described how Bloody Mary preyed on children: "Some girls with no home feel claws scratching under the skin on their arms. Their hand looks like red fire. It's Bloody Mary dragging them in for slaves – to be in gangs, be crackheads." There was, however, hope, even then; out of every 1,000 homeless girls, one was a Special One, someone so clever and brave that Bloody Mary can't touch her and instead disappears, leaving a glimpse of a pretty, luminous face in her wake – an image of what she was like before she was consumed by evil. Bloody Mary could be summoned by chanting her name before a mirror coated with ocean water in a pitch-dark room; and when



"If only one child yells out her true name, all will be safe"

she came, she burst through the glass and mutilated her victims before killing them. The children believed she carried a red rosary that she used as a weapon, striking children in the face with it to kill them. The children also believed that she was allied with Satan, and that she had killed her own child and had vowed to kill all human children. They believed that in the last days before God fled Heaven, he had been almost overwhelmed by all the crises on Earth that had been stirred up by Bloody Mary, and this distraction allowed her to storm the walls with her demon army and drive God out; but that it was not this alone that made God flee – he did so, crazed with grief, when he realised Bloody Mary's true identity: the Mother of Christ. So distraught was he, that he had run away and could not be found.

This is pretty spectacular stuff, and while there are echoes of other beliefs in all this – the name Bloody Mary and her summoning are a familiar child's scary story across the Western world, while the Blue Lady resembles Yemaya, a Santeria goddess, and

Erzulie, one of the voodoo Loa – but nothing like a consistent nationwide mythology among children had been revealed before. It immediately inspired fantasy writers. Disney bought the rights to Edwards's piece in 2000, with a view to making an as yet unrealised film out of it with Clive Barker. Stephen King used aspects of the story, and fantasy author Mercedes Lackey based her 2003 book *Mad Maudlin* on it. You can see similarities in Tim Powers's fiction (although much of that predates 1997) as well as the *Preacher* comics and TV series; but you would have expected folklorists and scholars of religion to be on the case immediately as well. Twenty years on, we ought to have myriad papers exploring and fleshing out these stories, books on the mythology, documentaries; but no – nothing. Edwards only gives the first names for her sources, so they are impossible to properly identify, particularly as their homelessness meant they left little in the way of coherent records behind them, and we only have her word they existed at all. The associated evidence she mentions, such as children's drawings, has never turned up anywhere, and no one in any other city, or even in Miami, has ever reported coming across anything similar, then, or since. I find it difficult to imagine that no one has tried. I also find it hard to believe that if these stories

LEFT: The Colony Hotel in Miami; one of Satan's Hellmouths but also a source of neon for angels.

had some existence beyond this single article, that *The Florida Project* would not have used them in some way, given its focus on almost exactly the group of people for whom they seemed so important.

After interest was stirred by a Reddit thread earlier this year, the *Miami New Times* ran a '20 years on' story, and asked Edwards to comment, but she refused, and does not appear to have written anything more on her scoop elsewhere – which also seems extraordinary. This suggests all is not what it seems. Short though it is, there are inconsistencies in the tale. For example, if it was a nationwide mythology, and some of the children had been involved long enough to start to grow out of it, as she suggests, how could God have only fled Heaven the previous year? There simply wasn't time for the myths to be elaborated and spread nationally if that was so. It is possible that Edwards simply made the whole thing up, or she may have drawn together a bunch of disparate kids' scary stories into a rather more coherent framework than they warranted. It's also possible that there really was a mythology like this, but that it wasn't as far-reaching as it was made to appear, and existed among just a handful of children in the Miami homeless shelters rather than being a nationwide belief shared by thousands. The children would now be in their late 20s and early 30s, assuming they existed and survived the notoriously harsh conditions of life in Miami's underbelly. It would be interesting to hear what they have to say about all this.

NOTES

- 1 www.imdb.com/title/tt5649144/
- 2 www.miaminewtimes.com/news/myths-over-miami-6393117
- 3 For an earlier Mexican version of the La Llorona story, see 'Blasts from the Past', **FT351:28-29**.

♦ IAN SIMMONS is a regular contributor to FT and a science communications consultant.



THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes

SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

FREE **ForteanTimes** EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

Open your mind with Fortean Times. Get your monthly fix of strange phenomena, curiosities, prodigies and portents delivered direct to your door.

Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first **3 issues for £1**
- Exclusive **FREE Fortean Times** mug
- **SAVE up to 11%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops



SUBSCRIBE TO ForteanTimes TODAY!



YOURS FREE!

Call +44(0)330 333 9492

Or visit dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes

QUOTING OFFER CODE **P1705P**



Medical scientists respond to NDEs

A growing body of work on near-death experiences examines the content of the experiences and reveals the development of a new (to science) form of consciousness independent of the body

The Science of Near-Death Experiences

John C Hagan III, ed.

University of Missouri Press 2017

Hb, 169pp, notes, ind, £31.95, ISBN 9780826221032

Dr Hagan – a senior ophthalmic surgeon, editor of the journal *Missouri Medicine* and researcher into care of the dying – opens this anthology of papers with the bold statement that it is the “most comprehensive study in the world’s medical peer-reviewed literature.”

Hagan’s concern is this: advances in medical science and practice means that more patients than ever are being returned to life and consciousness after travelling further down the road to physical and mental death and, as a group, medical professionals are not trained to respond appropriately. “This must change!”

The 13 papers he presents are drawn from editorials and articles in *Missouri Medicine*, all united in their acceptance of the reality of the NDE experience established by the swelling canon of research from doctors and surgeons with their patients, and are more common than we might think. It soon becomes clear that the overarching discussion is not so much about NDEs as about patients’ reactions to their NDE experience and also, probably more importantly, their content.

After ‘returning’, many patients report positive changes in their perception of themselves, their lives and their philosophical outlook. On the other hand, some patients may be confused or frightened, or may not have the

vocabulary or the philosophical perspective to understand what has happened to them, or to adequately express what they mean and feel. This is where medical professionals need to be prepared to assist as part of recovery.

Those expecting to learn more about the physiological and neurological science behind the dying body and mind – and whether there is any explanation in that science for the NDE and its startling content – will find two chapters outlining the many existing scientific explanations of NDEs and a third examination “finding them all wanting”.

So far so good.

There is no doubt about the quality of information herein. Contributing to this study are some big hitters – Bruce Greyson (who formulated a method of grading the content of NDEs), Raymond Moody (whose *Life after Life* books rebooted the historical discussion of the subject), Dean Radin (who has pioneered methods of exploring the mind-body link); and the Dutch cardiologist Pim van Lommel explains why the theory of “non-local consciousness” might be essential to establishing a scientific explanation of NDEs.

The majority opinion in the book accepts that the research is disclosing a new (to science) form of consciousness that is independent of the body (i.e. localised consciousness). The editor is careful to emphasise that NDEs, however impressive the evidence, do not ipso facto mean veridical proof of life after death – or, more trickily, the existence of something called a ‘soul’ – but acknowledges that they do insert old philosophical debates into the heart of clinical

“After returning, many patients report positive changes in their self-perception”

practice. The ‘returning’ patient almost inevitably thinks about such ontological questions as ‘who am I’, ‘the meaning of life’, and ‘what happens after I die’? Such experiences are reported regardless of religion or atheism, and even when there is no religious context at all. On the whole, the contributors acknowledge that such questions are asked but do not debate them, concentrating rather upon those medical and psychological issues within their own expertise.

Responding to Peter Rogerson’s rather critical review of this book on the *Magonia* blogsite, Dr Hagan replied: “Our series is secular and makes no assessments or assertions on the religious content of NDEs.” Yet, scattered through the contributions are such phrases as “unity with the light source of love” and “heavenly and redemptive” One chapter giving the NDE experience of a professor of medicine, Tony Cicoria, specifically states his “reaffirmed belief in God”. On the whole, the authors tend simply to rely on the word “spiritual” without really defining it. This is the elephant in the room and very difficult to avoid; it is also the ground on which most of the sceptical attacks on this research are based, underlining the necessity to step outside the

religious context if the process of NDEs is to be seen as a natural psycho-biological process, universally available to humans in physiological crisis, regardless of intelligence, race, religion, sex and philosophy.

Not all is ‘heavenly’ though; there is a disturbing chapter on so-called “distressing” NDEs in which Greyson and Nancy Bush outline three types – “inverse, void and hellish” – and three types of reaction upon ‘returning’ – “the turnaround, reductionism, and the long haul”. Another chapter, by Penny Sartori, relates the experiences of children, whose purity of description is fascinating. Significantly, those children who had negative experiences, or who failed to understand or integrate their experience, suffered social and psychological problems later in life, again making the point of the necessity of providing appropriate help early.

There is so much of excellent summation in this anthology that it is disappointing to see the opening statement, calling itself “the most comprehensive study”. Granted space is limited, but because



the names and contributions of so many of the pioneers of the subject, from other times, countries, cultures and perspectives are omitted or overlooked, the study comes across as parochially American. This may have been deliberate, or even necessary, to reach the chosen readership – and indeed it may be fit for the specified purpose – but it seems both premature and unnecessarily self-congratulatory.

Continued on p60

The one that got away...

It's unlikely that a 'hairy biped' could survive modern gun culture, but they are there to be experienced, even if they cannot be explained

Beyond Boggy Creek

In Search of the Southern Sasquatch

Lyle Blackburn

Anomalist Books 2017

Pb, 294pp, illus, ind, app, \$16.95, ISBN 9781938398704

Texas writer and musician Lyle Blackburn returns with his third book on what he calls the 'Southern Sasquatch', an identification perhaps defensible on the level of appearance but problematic otherwise. Some years ago I coined the phrase "hairy bipeds" to characterise hominoid creatures alleged outside the Pacific Northwest. Though an uncatalogued great ape in the region may be improbable, sightings and some fairly compelling physical evidence that leave the question at least open, have attracted sympathetic attention from physical anthropologists and others whose judgments one does not casually dismiss.

The occurrence elsewhere of apparently comparable animals either complicates or discredits the issue, depending upon how you look at it. In his well-researched books, Blackburn chooses what might be called the literalist option: if the witnesses are generally credible, it follows that the creatures – major, quasi-human mammals – dwell among us as surely as deer, bears and coyotes. Except, admittedly, undetected but for the occasional fleeting observation.

My heretical view is that sincere reporters of anomalies are no more or less prone to error than witnesses to more ordinary stimuli. A sighting of an ambiguous shape in darkness and at a distance is going to be of little worth, while a closer encounter in

decent viewing conditions is more likely to provide an accurate account. Blackburn provides plenty of the latter, confirming what foretells have long known: people have vivid experiences of very odd things that don't dissolve readily into the prosaically comfortable.

Frustratingly, the very odd things may be less unexplained than inexplicable. In a nation loopy in love with guns, the likelihood that man-apes of zoological composition could survive long falls between approximate and absolute zero. It is surely futile to contend otherwise, even as it's hopeless to call on ostensibly conventional solutions on the



presumption that, however manifestly inadequate, they'll have to do because the alternative is unthinkable. (For example, this all-time favorite: that the reports are a popular response to the 1950s Bigfoot mania; in fact, 19th-century American newspapers carried no shortage of hairy-biped stories.) Like Alien Big Cats in Britain, hairy bipeds are there to be experienced, and not much else. We can't claim to grasp larger meanings when even vocabulary fails us.

If you're looking for deep phenomenological insights into core paradoxes, you won't find them here. If you're like me, a lifelong anomalist whose principal interest is in a larger theoretical framework in which anomalies are something other than the subjects of endless, seemingly random stories, Blackburn is not your man. On the other hand, he's knowledgeable, and he'll teach you a thing or two about what's in the reports.

One interesting observation is that Southern hairy bipeds tend to be "somewhat smaller and ape-like when compared to the forest giants of the Northwest." They're "also,

evidently, meaner." Some accounts describe threatening behaviour. A few note animal reactions to a creature's presence, implying something outside human perception and imagination. There are the usual confounding footprints: some with five toes, others four, even three, the latter two making even less sense, ironically, than the sightings.

No book like this would be complete without at least one instance of the Proof That Got Away. Blackburn relates an interview with a Texas rancher who one day in 1974 noticed his dogs chewing on what proved to be a "huge, hairy leg severed at the knee joint... covered in dark, coarse hair", in Blackburn's words. A human foot with human toes eliminated the possibility of bear remains. Having no idea what it could be, the man handed it over to the Dallas police, who couldn't identify it either. They did not return it, and it was only years later that the man thought to connect it with Bigfoot. The supposedly extraordinary body part is now untraceable.

In my view such matters are as much an aspect of the phenomenon as the entities in the encounters, which is to say they're confined to narratives, and they never transcend them to produce the promised proof. Not that there is no evidence at all that transcends the merely verbal, but in effect (one can't speak to intent) it serves just to enhance its verbal correlate. In common with most fortune literature, *Beyond Boggy Creek* turns out to be about experiences it is possible to have rather than events it is possible to validate. It demonstrates that when one speaks of "anecdotal testimony," one is explaining precisely nothing.

Jerome Clark

★★★★★

Continued from p59

Given the mission statement, we expected some sort of 'white paper' plan for the proposed education programmes, or perhaps draft guidelines for medical staff, but this too is missing. A good start in understanding a difficult matter, it deserves careful development and implementation.

Bob Rickard

★★★★★

Avebury Soundscapes

Steve Marshall

10 track CD in jewel-case with 8-page colour booklet £11. Digital download £8, from www.exploringavebury.com/music

We can only grasp the narrative imaginatively, but it is dawning on us that the thinking behind Neolithic ritual architecture must have been engendered in a sensory aesthetic. That is, of a kind which appeals to the gut mind, rather than the intellect. Art functioned differently then: it had real power. As historian Lachlan Goudie observed, it was the first pulse of a creative instinct in our cultural history. And, yes, we can still put our finger on it and feel something.

Understanding this dynamic encourages exploration of the crevices open to us in remembering Neolithic experience. On a visit to the museum in Kilmartin, Argyshire, I found a CD of the earliest manmade sounds and music to inhabit the glen. Its tracks were listed chronologically, starting with bone pipes and percussion. Accordingly, through the ages these lone sounds came together as music, moving away from mimicry of birdsong and heartbeat towards something more sophisticated. Scholars naturally shy away from speculation, and the problem with this history is that there's no reason to assume that music and song didn't exist in the Stone Age.

Where straight-liners might take issue with Marshall's use of modern instruments and effects on this album, it seems to me more evocative of place than the Kilmartin example. Art carries a message across the millennia that separate us from those pipes, drums, bullroarers, and what-have-you, which set the rhythm of that



primordial pulse. This is what Marshall taps into. Think of his Avebury Soundscape as an echo, resonating back and forth with greater amplitude at a specific phenomenological frequency.

The album begins, naturally, with First Light and the binaural sounds of birds awakening. So many ancient ritual landscapes are suggestive of movement, procession, and track 2, Windmill Hill, led me along Avebury's stone avenues and upward, bisecting symbolic lands of the quick and the dead, 'seeing' memorial landforms long since flattened by the plough.

Marshall's intimacy with his subject is evident. This work is a sonic addendum to his 2016 book *Exploring Avebury: the Essential Guide*, complementing his contributions to our understanding of this place. One of the joys of both works are their fresh insights. It was Marshall who drew attention to the area's abundance of ancient streams and springs, and their integrated role in its specialness – keep this in mind as you listen to Rivers of Soul. He also discovered that stone 'axes' work as bullroarers, exploiting their aerodynamic quality to make sound.

It is the gaps in empirical evidence that induce us to dream Avebury's ancient cultural history into being, recalling not just our journeys but ones we might have made, or perhaps did make in some other place or time. Soundscape adds another layer of story – to each our own images – about the connections between the sites that constitute this ritual landscape, and what it meant to the people who lived through its creation and use. Artists are uniquely qualified to fill in these gaps with plausible speculation. For example, in track 8, The Sanctuary, a site marked by concentric rings of 6, 8, 12, and 16 post holes, musical exploration of relationships between these ratios and their underlying geometry is also relevant to constructions such as Woodhenge and Stonehenge. Another example is Marshall's use of Indo-European language,

opening up the possibility that Neolithic ideas were somewhat more Vedic than previously thought. The refrain from Bone Ceremony – the obvious single from the album – 'Dream and remember, dream and truly see', is a fitting mantra for phenomenological approaches to remembering as a way of reattaching and articulating our relationship to people who reached far beyond what they could know to become part of our imagination.

Rob Irving

★★★★★

Powers of Darkness

The Lost Version of Dracula

Bram Stoker, Valdimar Ásmundsson, Hans Corneel de Roos

Overlook Duckworth 2017

Hb, 320pp, notes, illus, ref, £20.00, ISBN 9780715651278

There are many reasons to read a book, but three very specific ones in the case of *Powers of Darkness*. The first is the relationship to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The second is the mystery story about how *Powers of Darkness* came to be so different from the original book. The third is the story itself, unharnessed from any other context.

Powers of Darkness, or *Makt Myrkranna*, an early 20th century Icelandic translation of *Dracula*, is different from Bram Stoker's original. Very different. In fact it veers so far from *Dracula* that it is pretty much a completely

new story. Characters have different names. Settings are changed. *Powers of Darkness* also changes the emphasis, with far more going on in *Dracula's* Castle, and the story ending fairly abruptly in London. Hans Corneel de Roos presents a lot of information about the variations, particularly in relation to Castle *Dracula*, with maps and

diagrams. This relationship, and variation, lies at the heart of the *Makt Myrkranna* mystery. Why is the story so different? Did Valdimar Ásmundsson go rogue and write his own version instead of translating the original text, or did he work with another version provided by Stoker?

This is a complex story. Corneel de Roos provides a lot of evidence to help him unpick this

tangled history, with extensive annotations throughout. I won't reveal here which side of the fence he comes down on, but his position is well argued and well presented.

Does the story stand up on its own merit? As a novella it works, though it probably suffers from constant comparisons to the original *Dracula*. I sometimes felt that Corneel de Roos went for the safer option in his word choice during the process of translating from Icelandic into English. However, the annotations are so extensive that he demonstrates why he has made those decisions and presents alternatives. In many cases it is very hard for a translator not to get between the original text and the translation. Here, Corneel de Roos shows his working which puts the reader at a huge advantage.

There are also discussions about particular forteen topics, including dancing manias, hypnotism and, of course, conspiracies, which form a larger part of this Icelandic version of *Dracula*.

Will this just appeal to *Dracula* and Bram Stoker aficionados? Not at all. There is a curious literary mystery at the heart of this story, and I think Corneel de Roos has done an excellent job of starting a valid discussion.

It will be interesting to see if this is the beginning or the end of the debate when others examine his evidence, and how many other translations out there hide variations from their original stories.

Steve Toase

★★★★★

Axis of Heaven

The Greenwich Meridian; Britain's Secret Axis of Power

Paul Broadhurst & Gabriele Trso

Mythos 2017

Hb, 431pp, illus, notes, refs, bib, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9780951323618

Axis of Heaven begins with the premise that prior to the inception of the Greenwich Meridian in 1675, a more ancient line of power was known to a secret and kingly elite. What the authors offer the reader is an exhaustive psychogeography of the axis – from Royston to Lewes – told through the locations and

personages that define English history. *Axis* is a detective story, an archaeological investigation and an exposition of the fascination with the Axis Mundi across time and space.

The research that has gone into the telling of this story is impressive, and the opening section establishes its historical grounding in a

detailed examination of Greenwich from its ancient roots, through its mediæval period to the Tudors. With easy-to-read scientific, historical and archaeological detail, the

reader is taken on a whirlwind journey through the history of Albion. As Elizabeth I, John Dee, the Royal Society and the Freemasons pass before our eyes, a mythic history of exploration and astronomy and the agents of the Invisible College links Albion to the stars – quite a trip!

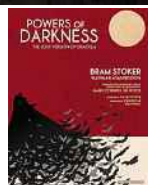
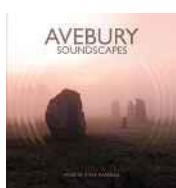
The remaining sections of the book – the Northern and Southern Axes – explore the idea of cosmic and kingly authority residing along the meridian by looking in forensic detail at the interrelationships between spirituality, monarchy and architecture.

Whether discussing monoliths or the grandeur of Waltham Abbey, Druidism, or genealogy, it is done with passion and scholarship. Not being an aficionado of the questing narrative, I enjoyed being escorted along mystical highways and enjoyed the insight into the cosmic dimension of the English landscape in this highly engaging history of England.

Leaving no stone unturned (!) *Axis* is written for a general audience and little, if any, specific historical or technical understanding of psychogeography is needed. The volume is lavishly illustrated, predominantly in colour, and the very high production values make this a very attractive book for any reader interested in mythology, star-lore, Arthurian legend, mediæval and Tudor English history, as well as alternative histories of English life. With exhaustive notes, a detailed bibliography and index, *Axis* has all the makings of an invaluable research tool.

Chris Hill

★★★★★



Pompeii & circumstance

Pompeian brothels and erotica get short shrift, but barring a few (fairly minor) errors, this is an excellent guidebook for the curious visitor

Pompeii

An Archaeological Guide

Paul Wilkinson

IB Tauris 2017

Pb, xiii + 240, illus, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781784539283

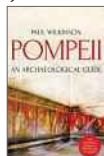
Pompeian pilgrims will be in good hands with Paul Wilkinson, an old Pompeian hand, archaeologist, journalist, tour-leader and BBC documentary maker.

'A Guide to Further Reading' combines Wilkinson's favourites (Mary Beard tops the list – see her *Pompeii* [2008, *Fires Over Vesuvius* in US]) with a five-page Bibliography, to which I'd add: Kristina Milnor, *Graffiti & the Literary Landscape in Roman Pompeii* (2014) and Ingrid Rowland, *From Pompeii: The Afterlife of a Roman Town* (2014). Also, Carlo Avvisati's *Pompeii: Mestieri e Botteghe 2000 anni fa* (2011), compared to Wilkinson's earlier *Pompeii: The Last Day* (2003), generally to the latter's advantage by David Noy (*Bryn Mawr Classical Review*, 2004. 03. 51). Wilkinson laudably cites websites, but could have mentioned *The Ancient Graffiti Project* (ancientgraffiti.wlu.edu).

Since many visitors will also take in Herculaneum, it's worth remarking the excitement at the prospect of opening and deciphering the 700 or so charred papyrus rolls unearthed in a villa that may (or may not) contain lost literary treasures. Statius's verses (*Silvæ* 4. 78-86) on hopes for future excavation and fears of more Vesuvian fires might have been quoted.

Users will thank Wilkinson for his 'Glossary of Latin terms', though something has gone awry with the bilingual 'Ministry Fortuna Augusta'. The plural of *balneum* is wrong, whilst *ala* is

understood to mean 'bedroom': it can denote 'recess', not necessarily a boudoir. One word conspicuously absent is *lupanar* (brothel), an area no visitor will miss. Of the 32 colour plates, one shows Priapus urinating from his brooding phallus, and another, a jolly scene of Roman rumpy-pumpy. Otherwise, erotic details are rationed.



Those who want more – and who wouldn't? – should apply to Michael Grant's unmentioned *Eros in Pompeii*.

The index is serviceable, though somewhat choosy on no obvious principle, especially regarding the names of modern scholars. After a tersely helpful Timeline from antiquity to AD 1997, the Introduction and trio of chapters survey everyday life in Pompeii, plus detailed descriptions of the Amphitheatre Riot of AD 59 and the eruption itself, with full transcriptions of Pliny the Younger's pair of autoptic accounts. These pages display how well Wilkinson knows his Pompeian onions.

A few minutiae: Wilkinson's urban-rural dichotomy regarding dislike of toga-wearing misleads. Augustus rebuked the populace for neglecting it, and Horace describes Romans at large as 'tunic-clad'. Lack of private baths and dubiety over marital bedroom arrangements could have been mitigated by such sources as Petronius and Seneca. One hot potato not grasped is whether or not there was a Christian and/or Jewish presence. Mary Beard dismisses this (cf. the online essay by Thomas Wayment & Matthew Grey) as "a fantasy" – odds are the notion derives from Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii*, which contains a group of such

religionists. Sergius Orata might have been given full credit for hanging-baths and oyster entrepreneurship, and I'd like to know Wilkinson's view of that age-old chestnut: which side of the road did the Romans drive?

Corrigenda usually press on the heels of Addenda. We don't know if the poem 'Copa' was contemporary or not, though it was worth including. Wilkinson's Achilles heel, though, is his inaccurate referencing of classical sources. Of two Petronian passages cited, the first is spurious, the second misplaced (should be ch. 44, not 118). An exhortation attributed to a non-existent Pliny letter belongs to Juvenal, *Satire* 14, vv. 59–62. On page 75, the two Plinys are confused – the uncle penned the *Natural History*, not the nephew. Worst of all (p169), the Elder Pliny is misdated by a century, and he did not invent the word *amphitheatrum*, a term used decades earlier by Vitruvius.

Still, as Rajani Palme Dutt said of Stalin's crimes, these are but "spots on the sun". This book stands or falls with the archaeological sites-guide that makes up its second part. Here, Wilkinson is faultless. His diagrams are clear, the relevant information dispensed without fuss, with due acknowledgement to the many archaeologists and epigraphers involved. All this written in clear, jargon-free English, nicely leavened with wit.

Double kudos also to IB Tauris for their eye-friendly font and their outstanding range of publications ranging over disparate subjects from ancient to modern times.

The Romans had Pompey the Great. In Wilkinson, we have a Great Pompeian.

Barry Baldwin

★★★★★

Doctor Zipp's Amazing Octo-Con and Other London Stories

Dan Carrier

London Books 2017

Pb, 256pp, £9.99, ISBN 9780995721708

Dan Carrier is an old-school terrier reporter on the splendid *Camden New Journal*, a free weekly whose devotion to decent stories regularly provokes the ire of the local council. For many Camdenites, it's a highlight of the week...

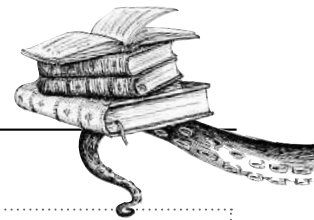
The 10 stories in *Doctor Zipp's Amazing Octo-Con and Other London Stories* are not, Carrier stresses, lightly disguised and fictionalised true stories, even though the narrator is an unnamed old-school terrier reporter on a local newspaper, the *London Evening Press and Star*, with a certain crossover with *FT*, such as the mysterious seal in the Hampstead ponds.

The titular tale is a cracking 'what-if?'. Octopodes appear to have wandered down the evolutionary path at the same rate as *Homo sapiens* and have a cranial capacity similar to ours. Octopus exploits have been a staple of *FT* for years: they can learn by observation; they can free themselves from their tanks and make good their getaway; they can even take on sharks. So how would it be to decipher and speak their language? Enter Doctor Zipp, a marine biologist with an interest in cross-species linguistics and the creator of the robotic Octo-Con, found dead and covered with lesions on a Guernsey reef. He had been searching for a creature as intelligent as humans but less destructive of their environment.

Other tales reveal the Elvis-obsessed meter maid; the serial bus thief; and Kermit the Hermit of Hampstead Heath, based, presumably, on the story later made into the film *Hampstead*, starring Diane Keaton and Brendan Gleeson, about Harry Hallows, who claimed squatters' rights over a valuable patch of real estate so he could live in peace on it. Enjoyable, especially for Camden denizens, if only sporadically fortaean.

Val Stevenson

★★★★★



The SF and fantasy round-up

David V Barrett welcomes Philip Pullman's latest, a Russian Revolution-tinged story of exile, a rip-roaring Victorian adventure, some stoner SF, and a tale of British Nazis and Alan Turing...

The Book of Dust

La Belle Sauvage

Philip Pullman

David Fickling Books/Penguin 2017

Hb, 546pp, £20, ISBN 9780385604413

The Sisters of the Crescent Empress

Leena Likitalo

Tor 2017

Pb, 318pp, \$17.99, ISBN 9780765395450

The Legion Prophecy

Mark A Latham

Titan Books 2017

Pb, 358pp, £8.99, ISBN 9781783296842

What the Hell Did I Just Read

David Wong

Titan Books 2017

Pb, 441pp, £7.99, ISBN 9781785651656

Destroyer

Andrew Hickey

via amazon 2017

Pb, 172pp, £7.67, ISBN 9781521347713

The first volume of Philip Pullman's years-awaited *Book of Dust*, *La Belle Sauvage* is finally here. This is the name of a canoe owned by 11-year-old Malcolm Polstead, who helps out in his parents' riverside pub in Oxford. The only thorn in his side is Alice, the 15-year-old girl who does the washing up, who is forever making snide remarks. Just over the bridge is a priory where he often goes to help the nuns and their handyman (he's a helpful lad!). The nuns are asked to look after a six-month-old baby, Lyra – familiar to all of us from *Northern Lights/The Golden Compass*. Familiar also are people's dæmons – their inner self, in

animal form.

Malcolm finds himself caught between opposing groups: scholars wanting to preserve freedom of thought, against what are effectively the Church's secret police, who are cracking down on any independent thought, even encouraging schoolchildren to inform on their teachers and parents. The scholars have heard a prophecy about Lyra, and want to protect her; the Church wants to abduct her. Malcolm and Alice end up working together to rescue Lyra from various opponents including one of the nastiest characters you'll meet in fiction, a brilliant but twisted scientist who beats his own dæmon, a three-legged hyena.

The plot of *La Belle Sauvage* isn't as rich and complex as in the original trilogy, but it's an excellent adventure story and it's beautifully written, as you'd expect from Pullman. The title translates as either *The Wild Beauty* or *The Beautiful Savage*; I wonder whether it may also suggest the noble savage. Malcolm is just an ordinary lad, and Alice is often uncouth, and snarky much of the time – but both risk their lives to protect the infant Lyra; there are many unexpectedly touching moments.

La Belle Sauvage isn't exactly a prequel to *His Dark Materials*, but it's near enough. We discover how Lyra comes to be at Jordan College in Oxford; we learn a lot about alethiometers; we have the beginnings of research into Dust; and we see a subtle nuance to Pullman's attitude to religion. The nuns caring for Lyra are warm and friendly; it's not religious people that he's critical of, but the authoritarian institutional abuse of religion. Young Malcolm is encouraged by an Oxford don who befriends him to think with clarity, and to think for himself – a message none of us would disagree with!

In *The Sisters of the Crescent Empress* Leena Likitalo concludes the story she began in *The Five Daughters of the Moon*. The revolution has begun, and the five sisters have been sent into exile in the far north. The youngest, Alina, just seven, meets the ghosts of their mother's two sisters; another sister finds, in the cellar, the bullet-holed wall where they were shot. The oldest, Celestia, will become empress now that their mother has died – but she knows that the leader of the revolution, Gagargi Prataslav, who powers his Great Thinking Machine with the souls of children, will only want her by his side to lend him legitimacy. How can she save her sisters? Inspired by the last months of the Romanov sisters in the Russian Revolution of 1917, this novel makes up for little action – seven months holed up in a remote country house – by excellent writing and by the five very distinctive narrators.

To say that David Wong's *What the Hell Did I Just Read* is reminiscent of two great psychedelic SF novels from the Sixties, *The Butterfly Kid* and *The Unicorn Girl* by Chester Anderson and Michael Kurland respectively, is high praise. It's written as if autobiographical; David Wong, his friend John and girlfriend Amy are called in to solve problems the police can't cope with, when shape-shifting interdimensional creatures descend on a small American town and start abducting children. Three points need remembering as you read this gruesome but often hilarious novel: David and John work best when they're high, nothing is as it seems – and everybody's an unreliable narrator. Great fun!

It's the late 19th century, and a small group are defending

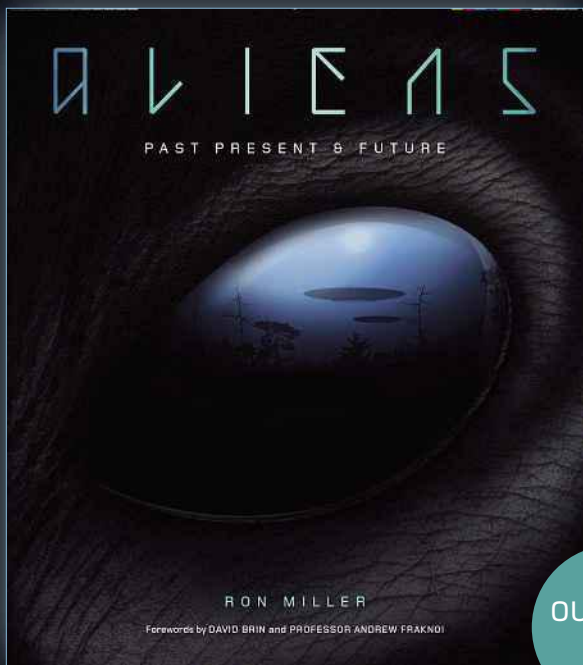
Britain – and the world – against vampiric ghouls that have slipped through from an alternate world, with some of that world's versions of people from our world who are bent on doing us no good, along with assorted other villains – devious orientals and Russians, of course. *The Legion Prophecy* is the third in Mark A Latham's series that began with *The Lazarus Gate*. Captain Jim Denny, who has been fighting these devilish creatures for some time, is teamed up with not just an American but a woman, with a deeper secret...

Although this is a standalone novel it refers back to events in the earlier books rather too often – but this is a good rip-roaring adventure, with action, bloodshed and treachery in a nicely realised Victorian London.

Andrew Hickey's *Destroyer* is far more professionally presented than most self-published books, though he falls into the trap of using a sans-serif font, which should be banned for anything over a page in length! Rudolf Hess makes his flight to Scotland in 1941, carrying pages in cipher. Ian Fleming, working for the Secret Service, recruits Alan Turing to decipher the text – and Turing discovers a magickal ritual. Enter black magic novelist Dennis Wheatley, our old pal Aleister Crowley and the perpetually disreputable gossip columnist Tom Driberg ("A nasty little spiv, a Communist and a homosexual. But a charmer. Knows everybody," Fleming tells Turing), and we have an intriguing adventure in which our disparate and perpetually squabbling crew try to stop a group of upper-class British Nazi-sympathisers performing a powerful magickal ritual which would change the course of the war. And it seems they succeeded...

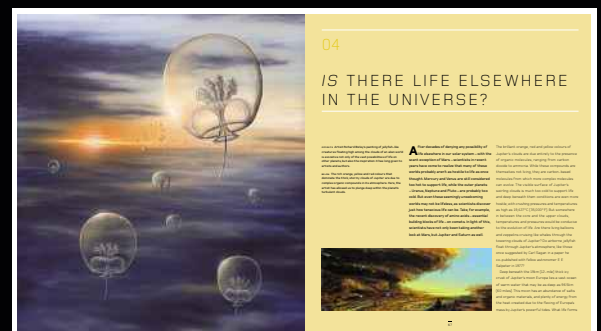
ALIENS

The most comprehensive illustrated book on our fascination with life beyond Earth



OUT NOW
£25

- Written by world renowned author and artist **Ron Miller**
- Features contributions from *New York Times* bestselling author **David Brin** and xenolinguistics expert **Dr John Elliott**
- Contains more than 200 stunning illustrations and photographs
- Images range from ancient engravings and pop culture iconography to purported UFO sightings and illustrations depicting modern science's idea of extraterrestrial life



WATKINS

Our books celebrate conscious, passionate, wise and happy living. Be part of the community by visiting www.watkinspublishing.com



Dysfunctional family fortunes

Michael Haneke's latest film turns the camera's unflinching gaze on a wealthy modern family – the result is a merciless assault on contemporary society's selfishness and hypocrisy



Happy End

Dir Michael Haneke, France 2017
On UK release from 1 December

The latest offering from director Michael Haneke is a typically jaundiced look at modern, specifically French, society. Ostensibly, it is a sophisticated soap opera about the problems besetting wealthy family. Ageing patriarch Georges Laurent (French icon Jean-Louis Trintignant) is exhibiting signs of dementia and has ceded control of his construction empire to his daughter Anne (Haneke regular Isabelle Huppert). Her single-minded dedication to the family business means she neglects her feckless son Pierre (Franz Ragowski), whose slovenly attitude to work has caused an industrial accident at one of the firm's sites. Georges's son Thomas (actor/director Mathieu Kassovitz, who incidentally mounted his own scathing attack on French life in *La Haine*) is a successful surgeon who is obliged to take sole responsibility for his 13-year-old daughter Eve (the excellent Fantine Harduin)

Lengthy scenes ratchet up the tension to an often unbearable level

when his ex-wife dies of a drugs overdose; which, it is strongly hinted, was administered by the teenaged girl. Eve learns that her father, who is now remarried, is carrying on an affair with a concert musician after discovering a series of increasingly dark and perverse messages on his laptop.

A heady brew then; and to cap it all off the story takes place in the lavish Laurent family pile in Calais against a backdrop of social inequality and concern about the growing seriousness of the refugee crisis.

I said "ostensibly" at the beginning of this review because Haneke's purpose here is not merely to air one dysfunctional family's dirty laundry in public; rather he is interested in unpicking

the tangle of relationships to expose the hypocrisies and prejudices behind them and the consequences these inevitably bring. Haneke's detached style is uniquely suited to this sort of material: the pitiless gaze of his static camera and the punishing long takes combine to create a forensic interrogation of his characters. At the same time, those techniques involve the audience to an uncomfortable degree: we are forced to observe things that we would prefer to look away from and squirm as lengthy scenes ratchet up the tension to an often unbearable level. Sounds too are used to unsettle: a phone rings endlessly; a dog barks unceasingly.

The acting is uniformly terrific and imbues this rogues' gallery with sufficient recognisably human frailties to engender at least some degree of sympathy. It is true to say that there are no 'innocents' in this film, but the performances meld with the dialogue so well that we can reach a certain level of understanding about why these people are the way they are.

Trintignant's patriarch Georges is given a speech which sheds some light on his cynical, emotionally unavailable nature; Pierre's at first amusing but then disturbing karaoke scene highlights his desperate need for love and affection.

Happy End is not an easy film to watch, but who ever said cinema has to be easy? There's something about Haneke's style which gives you the impression that he could just as easily turn his camera around and start picking apart the failings and foibles of the audience. Which would be fair enough, really, as he is making points about society's problems, not simply those of some fictional characters: the selfishness, the lack of responsibility, the lack of empathy – typified by the family's attitudes toward their blue-collar workforce and immigrant servants – are all too real and familiar.

Haneke is a film-maker who commands attention not just because of the quality of his work but because he dares to make challenging films for an adult audience.

Daniel King



Blade of the Immortal

Dir Takashi Miike, Japan 2017
On UK release from 18 December

Were it not for the fact that he's 57 years old, one might describe director Takashi Miike as the *enfant terrible* of Japanese cinema. Many of his films exhibit a no-holds-barred approach, as outrageous visuals, wild technique and broken taboos assault the eyes and ears. Traditional Japanese genres such as the yakuza or samurai film are used as the basis for flights of

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth REVEREND PETER LAWS dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com)

The Thing

Dir John Carpenter, US 1982
Arrow Video, £14.99 (Blu-ray)

Between Night and Dawn

Dir George A Romero, US 1971-73
Arrow Video, £49.99 (Blu-ray)

JD's Revenge

Dir Arthur Marks, US 1982
Arrow Video, £17.99 (Blu-ray)

Killer 'B' Movie Collection

Dir various, US 1951-61
Fabulous Film, £39.99 (DVD)

Face it – the horror fan in your life may have said they loved the huge smelly candle and overpriced biscuits you bought them last year – but if you really want to see his or her little face light up come Christmas morn, then why not pick something from this scary selection box of freaky new releases?

However the weather turns out, you can still give your loved one the gift of snow this Christmas, with Arrow Video's gooier-than-ever 4K release of John Carpenter's *The Thing*. Sporting stellar video and audio and packed with extras (both new and ported), this chilling slice of paranoia is the perfect winter film for the whole family. Tip: Double-Bill it with *Frozen*.

Another important aspect of the Yuletide season is to remember those who may be lonely and forgotten – and so why not invite three neglected little scamps into your home this Christmas? *Between Night and Dawn* is a wonderful set of Blu-Rays, showcasing three of George A Romero's least remembered works. *The Crazies*, in which



This chilling slice of paranoia is the perfect winter film for the family

everybody in a town goes postal, is a riot in every sense of the word, while the little-seen romantic drama *There's Always Vanilla* shows Romero's non-horror side. Best of all, perhaps, is his terrific occult spin on women's liberation, *Season of the Witch*.



The Christmas season is well known for traditional ghost stories, so why not honour the spirit of Dickens with a murdering rapist-pimp who uses a cursed floppy-hat to possesses a young law student, causing him to murder old ladies with a taxi and beat the crap out of his girlfriend, because apparently, “females like that”? Yes, *JD's Revenge* is a definite product of its time (1970s Blaxploitation horror), but if you can cope with rampant political incorrectness, this is a genuinely gripping, sometimes shocking and occasionally laugh-out-loud ghost story.

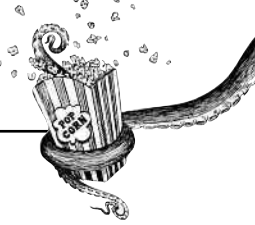
And of course, nothing says Christmas more than a humongous praying mantis, eating a tribe of screaming Eskimos. You'll find that in *The Deadly Mantis*, which is just one of nine retro monster movies in Fabulous Film's 'Killer 'B' Movie Collection'. It's DVD only, sadly, but you can still turn that frown upside down: delights await, including Steve McQueen's clunky teen-angst over psychotic jam in *The Blob*, or a woman coping with lecherous men on a spaceship bound for the monster-infested Mars in *The Angry Red Planet*.

fancy which simply don't occur to most other film-makers. However, Miike is equally capable of making subdued, contemplative works which explore ideas and themes of a beguiling, personal nature.

Arriving in the UK as Miike's 100th film (although he's since finished yet another) *Blade of the Immortal* is a classic samurai picture made with a modern sensibility. Based on Hirou Samura's long running manga of the same name, it tells the story of Manji (Takura Kimuya) a *hatamoto* – a samurai in direct service of the Shogun – who in the film's opening sequence kills a gang of corrupt officials, an act which puts a price on his head. Pursued by seemingly hundreds of bounty hunters Manji is goaded into a showdown after his innocent, doll-like sister is murdered. Manji dispatches everyone in sight but is himself mortally wounded. At this point we're about 10 minutes in and the narrative has reached the point at which most action movies would end. Not so with Miike. As Manji lays dying he is approached by a mysterious cloaked figure who gives him the supernatural ability to heal his wounds at an astonishing rate (including severed appendages). Now effectively unkillable, but without purpose, he retreats from life.

Some 50 years later Manji – who hasn't aged a day – is tracked down by a young girl called Rin (Hana Sugisaki), who wants him to avenge her family's death at the hands of a group of master swordsmen led by the vicious but enigmatic Anotsu (Sota Fukushima). Manji at first refuses, but it dawns on him that Rin is the double of his murdered sister and so, seeing a chance to put right an injustice and achieve personal redemption, he agrees to fight for her.

What follows is a thrilling journey as Manji and Rin encounter, one after another, the members of Anotsu's gang. You might think this means a long series of fight scenes – and you'd be right; but Manji's enemies each have their own distinct weaponry and fighting style, which means every sequence is different from the last and you never quite know who's going to rock up next. Miike has taken great care to set all of this action in a wholly convincing



historical setting which gives the film an epic quality that sets it apart from other examples of the genre.

Blade of the Immortal is an accomplished piece of work that shows a great affection for and understanding of the samurai picture and as such is right up there with the classics of the genre. As might be expected, the film is incredibly violent although lacking the brutal sadism that has occasionally pushed Miike's films close to being unwatchable. I think that's because his intention here is not to shock or repel but to engender a sense of awe and admiration for the warriors he presents to us. Having said that, if you can't stand the sight of blood then I suggest you look away for the last 135 minutes.

Daniel King



Mountain

Dir Jennifer Peedom, Australia 2017
On UK release from 15 December

A documentary about mountains – the awe and terror they inspire, and the arenas they become for extreme sports. The first thing to say is that the landscape shots are simply jaw-dropping, as is the footage of sundry mountaineers, skiers, BASE jumpers and so on. Presenting vistas I've never seen before from camera positions probably never previously attempted, the visuals effortlessly convey the film's central message: that mountains are true wonders of the world.

The narration is provided by Willem Dafoe, who describes how mankind in earlier times felt a mixture of fear of, and reverence for, mountains. Life was already hazardous and uncertain enough without adding to the danger by attempting to scale these peaks. However, as Dafoe puts it: "As knowledge grew, fear was replaced by fascination"; and, pushing back against the often stifling restrictions of 20th century life, people began to explore these previously shunned spaces.

There is some archive footage of early Victorian climbers; their attempts at mountaineering, considering the equipment available to them, would be a story in itself. Pausing to acknowledge the landmark ascent of Everest in

1953 by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, the film rattles on to the era of extreme sports; some of the feats accomplished are themselves wonders to behold. The sheer audacity of these individuals is incredible.

At times, the narration veers between pretentious and platitudinous, but it does raise some interesting questions about why we climb, facing potentially fatal consequences, and what this says about us. Is it narcissism, a death wish or simply a desire to see some of the most beautiful places in the world? Without experiencing these situations for ourselves we will never really know, but *Mountain* takes us as close as most of us will ever get.

Daniel King



The Evil Within

Dir Andrew Getty, US 2017
Screenbound Pictures, £9.99 (Blu-ray)
£5.99 (DVD)

Fifteen years in the making, the story behind Andrew Getty's *The Evil Within* is almost as oddly mesmerising as the actual fruit of his drug-addled labour. Released two years after Getty's death, the film tells the story of the developmentally disabled Dennis (Frederick Koehler) who befriends his own reflection in a mirror. As its power over him grows, the demonic reflection commands Dennis to kill; and then things get weird.

Supposedly based on meth addict Getty's own drug-fuelled nightmares, the film at times evokes almost Lynchian levels of absurdist horror, making it a movie that frankly has to be seen to be believed. But while Getty undeniably managed to create a very memorable and original piece, his first and only film is anything but faultless. The portrayal of the main character's disability is problematic to say the least, and some of the – for lack of a better word – normal sequences are at times stilted. However, *The Evil Within* still manages to be a deliriously creative and genuinely disconcerting film, which is well worth watching for the sake of its bizarre novelty alone.

Leyla Mikelssen



SHORTS

THE MUMMY

Universal Pictures, £14.99 (Blu-ray), (£9.99 DVD)

Intended as the first entry in the 'Dark Universe', this desiccated mess doesn't inspire confidence in Universal's new world of gods and monsters. It's a CGI-stuffed would-be blockbuster starring a puffy-looking Tom Cruise as a (supposedly) loveable rogue with a taste for purloined antiquities going up against a vengeful Egyptian queen and her zombified minions. Aiming for a light adventure movie tone, the film's frequent attempts at jocularity continually fall flat, while the scares are unlikely to trouble the sleep of even the most sensitive 12-year-old. Russell Crowe, in a bit of hopeful world-building, turns in a career-worst performance as Dr Jekyll (his Mr Hyde appears to be a bad impersonation of Ray Winstone), but serial franchise-wrecker Alex Kurtzmann and his usual co-conspirator Roberto Orci should shoulder most of the blame for this disaster. **David Sutton** ★★☆☆☆

SHOCK TREATMENT

Arrow Video, £19.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

"It's not a sequel... it's not a prequel... it's an equal" to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* claimed creator Richard O'Brien. That isn't quite accurate, but (and it's almost becoming a cliché to say this) *Shock Treatment* is far better than its reputation suggests and was way ahead of its time. Parodying the effect that the shallow stardom of gameshows and reality TV have on normal folk, it sees Brad and Janet Majors undergoing couples therapy that goes very wrong (especially for Brad). Cliff de Young and Jessica Harper, the new Brad and Janet, are more than a match for their predecessors, and there is support from a host of *Rocky Horror* alumni and a gaggle of familiar faces (Rik Mayall, Barry Humphries, Ruby Wax). The songs are also top notch, with a high sing-along factor. Forget your preconceptions and book yourself in for a bit of (oooh) *Shock Treatment!* **MP** ★★★★★

CAPTURE KILL RELEASE

Eureka Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)

In this found-footage shocker, Jennifer buys a video-camera and documents her life with her partner Farhad, focusing particularly on their preparations to murder someone. Even from such a short synopsis, you can see that this film is walking a very well-trodden path, and it never strays enough to justify its existence. There are one or two slightly tense moments, but every beat is so achingly familiar that it's hard to care. The matter-of-factness, one imagines, is intended to be disturbing, but we are far from the genuinely terrifying banality of *Funny Games* or *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer*. On a positive note, the cast give game performances, and there is some really top-notch prosthetic and gore work; but a totally unbelievable ending dispels any goodwill. **Martin Parsons** ★★☆☆☆

MAD MAX FURY ROAD (BLACK & CHROME)

Arrow Video, £12.99 (Blu-ray), £9.99 (DVD)

Mad Max: Fury Road is a joy. A riotous, simple yet inventive return to the petrol-starved desert badlands of George Miller's trilogy, it's that rare action film that managed to charm both audiences and critics. Now it's back, in black and white. Apparently, George Miller prefers this version. Well, sorry George but I think you're wrong. The glorious over-saturated deserts and flashy fireballs lose their allure in monochrome. Admittedly the new colour scheme does ramp up the oddness of the surreal moments, particularly the sandstorm and swamp scenes, but it takes away too much with the loss of key flashes of white, red and, most importantly of all, green. Ultimately, what we love about the *Mad Max* universe is its colour, not its shades of grey. Knock off a star for this version, and go back to the original.

MP ★★★★★



SOUNDS PECULIAR BRIAN J ROBB PRESENTS THE FORTEAN TIMES PODCAST COLUMN

As a medium, podcasts have been enjoying something of a boom over the past few years. The democratisation of quality media production through high-specification computer equipment has allowed a plethora of previously marginalised voices their own access to what were once quaintly called 'the airwaves'.

In the past, broadcasting (reaching a wide audience from a single source) was heavily regulated and controlled, mainly through frequency scarcity: only those authorised or licensed to have access to the airwaves were allowed to broadcast. In UK terms that, initially, meant the BBC, with commercial stations coming along in the 1960s.

In terms of radio, there have been amateurs since the invention of the medium, reaching a crescendo with the offshore 'pirate' pop stations of the 1960s that ultimately led to the BBC launching Radio 1. For the longest time, Radio 4 (or NPR in the US) has been the default home of quality 'spoken word' content, whether that was drama, current affairs, or documentary radio.

Now, anyone with a microphone and an iPad, laptop, or computer and the right software can produce a decent podcast and launch their work onto a waiting world. Not all of them are good, while many are far better than you might expect, sometimes surpassing the productions of 'legitimate' broadcasters like the BBC or NPR. When it comes to fortean topics, there are a host of podcasts out there, ranging from the polished and compelling to the amateurish and downright weird. SOUNDS PECULIAR is your insider guide to the best of the current podcasts dealing with fortean topics: all you have to do is sit back and listen...

television shows that have drawn upon his work directly or indirectly. Later in the run they devote multiple instalments to Lovecraft's longer works, especially "The Call of Cthulhu" (episodes 42-44), "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath" (episodes 50-53), and "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" (episodes 54-58), among several others. Occasional episodes break the format, as in episode 110's live question and answer session with the hosts. Some episodes consist of readings of weird fiction by Lovecraft and other authors.

By the 120th instalment, the hosts had reached the end of Lovecraft's published works, having spent three years on the project. However, they elected to carry on, expanding to take in other celebrated weird fiction authors, especially those that influenced Lovecraft, including Charlotte Perkins Gilman ("The Yellow Wallpaper", episode 126), WW Jacobs ("The Monkey's Paw", episode 127), Charles Dickens ("The Signal-Man", episode 129), and many, many more. This has proved so successful that the now rather misnamed HP Lovecraft Literary Podcast is still going strong and heading rapidly towards its 400th episode.

Strengths: The easy-going chatty relationship between the hosts and their humorous approach to the material makes even Lovecraft's worst work entertaining.

Weaknesses: Dealing with every story chronologically means that some of the earliest episodes focus on rather poor short stories.

Recommended Episodes: "The Dunwich Horror" (episodes 65-68); "At the Mountains of Madness" (episodes 77-83); "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (episodes 84-88); "The Thing on the Doorstep" (episodes 99-100), "The Shadow Out of Time" (episodes 104-107).

Verdict: An accessible way into Lovecraft's fiction with knowledgeable commentary – and you don't have to have read the stories.



Podcast: The HP Lovecraft Literary Podcast

Web: <http://hppodcast.com/>

Hosts: Chad Fifer, Christopher Lackey

Episodes Count: 375+ (the first 120 deal with Lovecraft)

Format: Two presenters discuss the life and work of HP Lovecraft, story by story, with dramatic readings of extracts

Established: 2009

Frequency: Weekly

Topics: HP Lovecraft and other weird fantasy writers

If weird fantasy fiction is your thing, there are many podcasts out there that you're likely to enjoy. Some are simple readings of usually public domain (therefore older) short stories, often by masters of the genre. Some deal with more modern works and writers, often with a wider remit to cover the horror genre in general. One production in particular, *The HP Lovecraft Literary Podcast*, has dealt with the entire literary corpus of

a single key author. Between 2009 and 2012 and across 120 individual episodes, hosts Chad Fifer and Christopher Lackey (with guest readers and occasional guest presenters) have tackled each and every work published by Lovecraft.

Lovecraft (born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island, where he spent most of his life) is a notoriously divisive figure in the world of weird literature. He virtually invented the form, but his anti-black and anti-Asian racism (discernable in some of his work) was notable even for the times in which he lived. His life was short – he was dead by the age of 46 in 1937 – and had been lived largely in poverty. From his first commercial publication in 1922, aged 31, Lovecraft featured in many pulp magazines, prime among them *Weird Tales*. However, he lived frugally, finally exhausting a meagre inheritance shortly before his death.

Lovecraft achieved posthumous fame through revivals of his work, especially the so-called 'Cthulhu Mythos', including stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth". He was a compulsive correspondent, writing letters to many other contemporary writers, including Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E Howard and

the younger author Robert Bloch. He suffered a variety of physical and mental illnesses during his life, and died without much in the way of literary recognition. Only after his death was his work championed and extended by other writers, and his reputation was slowly rehabilitated so that he is now recognised as one of the most significant authors of the 20th century, especially in the horror and fantasy field.

In dissecting Lovecraft's oeuvre, Fifer and Lackey don't go soft on their subject. While they appreciate the work (they wouldn't spend several years producing a podcast dedicated to it if they didn't), they are happy to fault both Lovecraft's writing (especially in the somewhat clunky earlier stories) and the racist views that are often discernible in his settings and characterisations. They will gleefully demolish some of Lovecraft's silliest moments, while also appreciating those times when his fiction had the desired effect of creating an atmosphere of uncanny weirdness.

Each instalment is about 30 minutes long (some later ones are longer), beginning with a first episode that serves as an introduction and biography of Lovecraft and includes some discussion of films and



SERIOUS PASSION

Passionists are passionate about
the poor and powerless.

We recognise the Cross of Jesus
wherever we meet suffering humanity
and the suffering earth.

*For the Crucified God
in the Crucified People
on the Crucified Earth*

www.passionists-uk.org



Surreal & Fortean T-Shirts Galore

Rake Clag

From the Rake & Herald

www.therakeandherald.tv

**INTERSTELLAR WAR
IS COMING TO OUR WORLD**

WILL YOU BE READY?

@SMDreacor

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

ForteanTimes

To advertise here please email
imogen_williams@dennis.co.uk
 or call 0203 890 37 39

URGENT

ANIMAL SOS SRI LANKA
 Animal SOS Sri Lanka
 UK Registered Charity 1119902

Please LIKE us on

APPEAL TO SAVE LIVES

We face daily horrors in our work to save stray animals in Sri Lanka. Prince was found by some tourists. He had an horrific, foul smelling, maggot infested neck wound and was near to death when he arrived at our sanctuary. We saved his life along with 1000's of other desperate animals that we give a lifeline to. Without us, they are doomed. Prince lives at our sanctuary along with many other rescues that have suffered so greatly on the streets. Animal SOS Sri Lanka is a UK Registered Charity and we need your support NOW so we can continue saving lives.

Please save a life today by donating

PLEASE HELP US TO CONTINUE GIVING THESE ANIMALS A FUTURE BY DONATING TODAY. *There is no greater gift*

I enclose ☐ £100 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ Other £

Mr/Mrs/Ms.

First Name.....Surname.....

Address.....

Email.....

Please make cheques payable to: Animal SOS Sri Lanka. Post to: 12 Cheyne Avenue, South Woodford, London E18 2DR
 Or make a secure donation online **www.animalsos-sl.com** {E} **info@animalsos-sl.com** {T} **07773 746108** *thank you!*

Give more at no extra cost to you:

☐ **GIFT AID.** I would like Animal SOS Sri Lanka to reclaim tax on this & all future donations until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer & that I pay as much income or capital gains as Animal SOS Sri Lanka will reclaim in the tax year (currently 25p in every £1 donated.)

Signature..... Date.....

LIVING NATURALLY.

THE SOAPNUT APOTHECARY

LAUNDRY · SKINCARE · HAIRCARE

100% Natural · Organic · Vegan · Cruelty-Free

THE 1ST COMPANY IN THE WORLD TO DEVELOP A
100% NATURAL LAUNDRY, HAIRCARE, SKINCARE
RANGE BASED ON ORGANIC HERBS & ORGANIC
WILDCRAFTED SOAPNUTS.

PERFECT FOR SENSITIVE SKIN, ECZEMA,
PSORIASIS, ACNE OR DRY SKIN.

HANDMADE IN THE UK IN SMALL BATCHES
WITH 100% VEGAN, NATURAL AND ORGANIC,
ETHICALLY SOURCED, CRUELTY-FREE
INGREDIENTS. NOT TESTED ON ANIMALS.

FREE FROM: PALM OIL, SLS', PARABENS,
PHTHALATES, MINERAL OIL, ARTIFICIAL
ADDITIVES OR FRAGRANCES, MICRO PLASTICS
AND GM INGREDIENTS

USE CODE: FORTEAN FOR 15% OFF

WWW.SOAPNUTS.CO.UK



The world's fastest non-motorised device



provides a rapid solution for finger hand,
wrist, arm, elbow & shoulder pain

powerballs.com

Use **FT17** for a 25% discount

LETTERS

CONTACT US BY POST: BOX 2409 LONDON NW5 4NP OR E-MAIL SIEVEKING@FORTEANTIMES.COM
PLEASE PROVIDE US WITH YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS



Black Shuck in Woodbridge

Re 'Uneasy Riders' [FT358:42-48]: here is a biker's strange encounter, related on the Hidden East Anglia website (www.hiddenea.com), run by Mike Burgess of Lowestoft. Not long after midnight some time in "early 1973", Keith Flory was going home to the Suffolk town of Woodbridge from a night shift when he found himself followed by a Great Dane-sized Black Shuck, who bounded after his motorbike all the way down the town's long Old Barrack Road – effortlessly keeping up with him all the way until he finally lost his pursuer in Seckford Hall Road by the A12 coastal main road.

Matt Salusbury

By email

Hippo-Potus or Hail to the Teeth

The review of *The Smile Stealers: The Fine and Foul Art of Dentistry* [FT359:58] and its story of 18th century dentists taking teeth from the mouths of the poor to give to the rich reminds me of the commonly held 'mythconception' that George Washington's false teeth were made of wood. They were in fact composed of animal teeth (horse and hippopotamus) as well as the teeth of other humans. And while we cannot be sure that the President's false teeth were made from the teeth of slaves, it is fair to say that they were certainly... indented.

Martin Stubbs

London

Getting stuck in

According to the Hierophant's Apprentice, ["I heard it through the grapevine", FT356:52-53], urban legend maestro Jan Harold Brunvand asserts that "there is no known actual case of inextricable sexual entanglement", otherwise known as the Stuck Couple. While recent media reports of *penis captivus* (trapped toddler) – from Kenya, Malawi, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and the Philippines – all concern adulterous couples, suggesting that they are morality tales dressed up as contemporary

SIMULACRA CORNER



Tree of the skull

Harry Warren noticed this skull-like face on a tree outside Palma Cathedral in Palma, Majorca.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them (with your postal address) to Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP or to sieveking@forteantimes.com.

legend, medical literature does have several more credible accounts of *penis captivus* taking place within marriage, including a seemingly reliable case from the Isle of Wight in 1947 recalled by Dr Brendan Musgrave in a letter to the *British Medical Journal*, and corroborated by Dr SW Wolfe [FT314:14-15]. For other cases, see FT323:24, 340:22.

Edward Young

London

Correlation and causation

I would like to add a footnote to the extensive response to Edward Dutton's article 'Of Mouse

Utopias and Men' [FT358:75-77]. On 30 September I attended a Philosophy for All event. In the course of this there was an interesting conversation about why 'experts' come up with explanations of phenomena. One reason put forward was that specialists will always tend to explain things in terms of their own speciality. In other words, geneticists will always prefer a genetic explanation to other possibilities, maybe because they are unaware of other explanations.

This derives from ignorance of a fundamental principle of statistics: correlation is not necessarily causation. The classic example of the fallacy is that Christian preachers cause public

drunkenness, because in the 19th century statistics for the hiring of preachers run parallel to those for public drunkenness. (Obviously, the causal relationship is the other way round: drunkenness causes churches to hire more preachers.)

By confusing correlation and causation, and by not considering explanations outside their speciality, 'experts' end up talking nonsense (often, as in Dutton's case, with overweening confidence). It is up to us fortune-tellers to exercise our genius as generalists and to analyse the whole range of possible explanations before reaching a conclusion (if indeed we can).

Martin Jenkins

London

Gerald's Game

The urban legend about a woman handcuffed to a bed, with her unconscious husband naked on the floor wearing a Superman cape ['Superhero hijinks', FT359:73] was used by Stephen King in *Gerald's Game*, published 1992.

Jane Chetwynd-Appleton

Brighton, East Sussex

Davy Jones' locker

When David 'Daedalus' Jones [Necrolog FT359:28] moved into a care home several years ago, he offered the science centre where I worked at the time his scientific apparatus. When I accepted the offer I had no idea what I was letting myself in for. David occupied a large Victorian house in a leafy Newcastle suburb, spread over four floors, but, as I discovered, he only appeared to live in about one and a half of its spacious rooms; the rest was dedicated to science.

As he took me round, he would open a door and say "This is where I keep my electronics," ushering me into what would have been a sitting room, but which was stacked high with oscilloscopes, potentiometers, circuit boards, transformers, meters and racks of components; then, moving to the next door, "This is for my chemistry apparatus," revealing a similarly stacked room full of glassware. There was one room dedicated to back issues of *New Scientist*, containing almost every

LETTERS

one back to the 1950s; another was packed with miscellaneous journals. His large kitchen had long been used as a makeshift laboratory (he cooked in a second smaller one on another floor), where I observed a number of chemicals I felt it best not to venture too close to. Then he took me into the utility room and showed me the cupboard containing “chemicals I am not supposed to have” – the latter uttered with an impish grin.

It took several members of my team the best part of two weeks to remove all this bounty, with much of it going on to be used by the science centre, and the rest passed on to appropriate institutions. A colleague called in a few favours and arranged for a Newcastle University hazmat team to deal with the kitchen and the utility room. I was not able to secure one of his fabled perpetual motion machines, alas, as these had already been promised to a former colleague, but the science centre does now have a number of his other machines in its education department.

The whole place was extraordinary. It's the closest I have ever seen to the kind of place children's books portray eccentric scientist uncles as inhabiting, and the kind of fantastic lair most science communicators can only dream of.

Ian Simmons

Monkseaton, Tyne and Wear

Witch-bleeding

I greatly enjoyed Dr Middleton's discussion of Victorian era bleeding of witches as a means of dispelling their magical power [FT359:38-43]. Readers may be interested to learn of a feature of the customary law of the Isle of Man. Manx customary law had the doctrine of “bloodwipe” (earlier bloodwite), where drawing blood from a victim was punished by a set fine. The Bystander's Case of 1581 is recorded in *Liber Placitorum* (one of the sets of court records of the Manx courts). In that case it was found that bloodwipe was to be excused if the victim had used witchcraft against the defendant, and had spilt their blood in order to cancel the enchantment. Bloodwipe, and its witch-bleeding defence, survived until the first Manx Criminal Code of 1817.

Professor Peter W Edge

School of Law, Oxford Brookes University

Along with Edmundbyers, mentioned by Jacob Middleton in “Twilight of the Witches”, another location where superstitions died hard was rural Shropshire. According to Roy Palmer, in his book *The Folklore of Shropshire* (2004), such beliefs “by no means ended with the 19th century” (pp147+168). Another local author, Tim Williams, wrote in 1994 about an old man he met in

a pub who, whenever ill, consulted not a doctor but “an owd witch as lives on the [Long] Mynd”.

Richard George
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Witch legends

I was pleased to see the articles about witch bottles and the last days of English witches [FT359], but I was disappointed that neither of the authors referred to any witch legends. Admittedly, there are very few witch legends that feature

witch bottles, and it has to be said that out of all of those that I have read, there is no mention of Bellarmine bottles; nonetheless, I feel that some anecdotes from folklore might have livened up Mr Halliday's article.

For example, at Hadleigh in Essex there used to be a well-known wise-man called Cunning Murrell who made iron witch bottles to hurt witches who had bewitched people. Once, a Gypsy woman cursed a girl, causing her to bark like a dog, and her worried parents sought Cunning Murrell's aid. He made a witch bottle and heated it during the night until it exploded. The next day, the girl stopped barking, and in a quiet country lane nearby the charred body of a woman was discovered. From *Folklore Myths and Legends of Britain* (Reader's Digest, 1973).

In ‘Some West Sussex Superstitions Still Linger in 1868’ in *Folk-Lore Records Part 1* (1878), Charlotte Latham noted that a lady at West Dean, West Sussex, had once seen a bottle filled with pins standing on the hearth in a cottage. She was told not to touch it because it was red hot and touching it would “spoil the charm”. The daughter had had falling fits and the doctors could do nothing, so her mother had gone to consult a wise-woman who lived near Guildford. The wise-woman had told her to fill a quart bottle with pins and place it close to the fire “till the pins were red hot; and when that came about, they would prick the heart of the witch who had brought this affliction on my poor girl.”

Another tale from West Sussex features pins but no bottle. In the *Petworth Society Magazine* (March 1982) E Saunders told how a witch at Petworth had once caused a girl to become so ill the doctors could not cure her. Then someone advised the girl's mother to put some needles and pins in a basin and boil them on a fire, as this would prick the old witch. This was done, and shortly afterwards, the witch came to the family's home, begging them not to heat the pins anymore, because they entered her body – and after this the girl got better.

Another type of witch bottle is believed to contain the captured spirit of a witch. There is a picture of a Sussex one in Ralph Whitlock's book *In Search of Lost Gods*, but he doesn't give any details about it.

Curiously, Mr Halliday writes of witch bottles that: “Their use as anti-witchcraft agents was unique to England: there have been no comparable European finds. This may have been due to their resemblance to a bladder...” Has he read the abstracts of every single witch trial in the whole of Europe, and in Scotland and Wales, and all the relevant articles about archaeological finds, etc? Somehow I feel this is very unlikely; and furthermore, he implies that the bladders of European people are a different shape to our own English bladders. I can't help feeling that he may be wrong.

A similarly rash statement is made in *The Lore of the Land A Guide to England's Legends* by Jacqueline Simpson & Jennifer Westwood (Penguin, 2005) on page 280: “However, the belief that witches kept animal familiars is peculiar to England...” Presumably, they too have read all the abstracts of every single witch trial that occurred in Europe and know all the witch legends of those countries – if so, then perhaps they should have made this clear. Yet, if both Halliday's and Simpson & Westwood's statements are correct, then it seems to me curious that England had these types of witch beliefs quite different from the rest of Europe.

This point brings me round to another unusual type of belief about witches that may well be unique to England – indeed, so far as I can ascertain, it seems to be peculiar to villages near the South Downs. A few years ago, I noticed that in Sussex the legends concerning witches who immobilised wagons were all recorded of villages near the South Downs and, wondering what the reason for this could be, I began reading books about the folklore of other counties, gradually covering the whole of Britain, hoping to find out more about such tales. Eventually I wrote *British Witch*



“Quick – red eye reduction on or off?”



Clown spookiness

Here is an American Hallowe'en postcard, sent in 1924. The clown seems to be equated with gob-

lins – and I do admire the “equestrian” stance of the witch, complete with riding habit, whip and properly bridled owl!

Gail-Nina Anderson, *Newcastle-upon-Tyne*

Legends of Sussex (Country Books, 2016) which may well be the first comparative study of British witch legends, as it details examples from all over the country.

My research revealed two types of witch-stops-wagon tale that, so far as I have read, have not arisen anywhere else in Britain. In one type, recorded at Plumpton, Kirdford, and Balls Cross, when the witch stops the wagon, the carter retaliates by cutting or slashing the spokes of the wagon wheels, causing the witch's fingers to get cut. In the other type, recorded at Graffham, East Chiltington, Laughton, and Climping in Sussex, and at Bishops Waltham in Hampshire, the witch immobilises the wagon when she is in the shape of a hare and, incidentally, the witch-hare then gets injured by the carter. I would have loved to find witch legends like the two just outlined in other counties or other countries, but search as I might I haven't done yet.

The witch legends of witch-hares immobilising wagons and then getting injured by the carter (or his dogs) present a sort of hybrid of the two most common types of witch legends in Britain:

the most common is that of a witch who becomes a hare (or some other animal, or a tree, or some object) and the second most common type are those of witches (male or female) who immobilised wagons. What's interesting about these two types of legends is that while the belief that witches could become hares arose in ancient times, in Europe and Asia, the belief that witches could immobilise wagons and horses could not have arisen before the period when the big heavy 'destrier' type of horses first came to England, which was after the Norman Conquest. Indeed, these big heavy horses were mainly used in warfare, and their use in agriculture did not really take off until the Agricultural Revolution of the 18th-19th centuries, as until then oxen were mainly used to pull ploughs and wagons. Another type of witch legend that could not have arisen before the mid-1700s is the one where a witch (or wizard) is on their death-bed, but cannot actually die until they have passed on the secret of their power, or the imps they have, to another person – usually a family

member. This unusual type of witch legend has mainly been recorded in Sussex and Essex.

I found Dr Middleton's article 'Twilight of the Witches' a bit disappointing, as it seems to be mainly based on court records and newspaper reports of the late 19th century. The belief in witches actually lasted well into the 20th century – at least in Sussex. In his article 'Superstition in Sussex' in *Sussex County Magazine* (Jan 1939), Dr P Habberton Lulham wrote: "The belief in witchcraft is by no means dead yet, and in many Sussex villages I have been told that the witch's malevolence is directed mainly against farm-horses." And at the end of his article about Sussex ghosts published in *Sussex County Magazine* (Dec 1940), George Aitchison wrote: "In all seriousness a villager at Graffham told me of the witch he knew who changed herself into a hare."

"Superstitions linger longer in Sussex than most other counties," Cecile Woodford noted in her book *Sussex Ways and Byways*, written in the late 1960s: "Even today the belief in witchcraft and ill-wishing has not

entirely faded out."

Incidentally, some folklorists seem to think the term 'witch legend' is not a good one, because tales and anecdotes about witches are not the same as local legends of fairies, or the Devil, or dragons, as all these latter types of local legends are associated with certain landscape features – usually hill-tops, ancient earthworks and barrows – whereas the tales and anecdotes about local witches appear not to be. However, my research shows that witch legends arose (at least, in Sussex) along boundary zones formed by landscape features such as the northern escarpment of the South Downs, Roman roads and, though to a lesser extent, by rivers. Out of the 64 Sussex witches that I write about in my book, only two lived nowhere near the South Downs (they both lived at Hastings) and of the rest, the vast majority lived in villages just north of the South Downs.

Shaun Cooper

Clevedon, North Somerset

Cloud-enveloped

I was interested to read the article Vampiric Vapours [FT358:32-33], particularly the incident at Miami whereby a woman jumped into a bed and hid under the covers after seeing a cloud of smoke seep into the room through a door left ajar, then slowly descend and attack her. When I was researching phenomena for my book *Haunted Bishop's Stortford* (The History Press), I came across a similar story.

In the winter of 1962, a 16-year-old girl lived with her parents at The Falcon Pub (now the Fountain Bar). There appeared to be some poltergeist activity before she witnessed the cloud, and there was other supernatural activity happening on the premises on different occasions. I quote from my book: "One night she was painting in her room a 'still life' as she was at art college. She heard a rustling in the grate, which had not been used for many years. She thought the cause to be a bird or a mouse. Then the room became colder and colder. There was no central

LETTERS

heating in those days, and she ignored the sudden chill. Then she heard the floor creaking behind her, as if someone were walking to and fro. She refused to pay any heed, but it became more pronounced, and a menacing atmosphere invaded the room. She stood it for as long as she could, but eventually left the room and went to her bedroom, trying to make sense of it all. She lay on the bed and stared at the ceiling and a strange cloud formed above her. The cloud slowly descended upon her, and she lost consciousness. The next day she woke stiff and cold, the events clear in her mind's eye."

I wonder what these clouds are. Have any other readers experienced this phenomenon?

Jenni Kemp

Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire

Scary programmes

I was pleased to read the piece about scary kids' TV programmes [FT354:30-37] and subsequent correspondence. I remember many of these, though mainly viewed in fragments from behind the kitchen door while I was slaving over a hot stove getting aforementioned kids' tea ready. However, nobody seems to have mentioned the scariest of them all, *The Singing Ringing Tree*, which traumatised them for life, and gave me quite a fright as well. This nasty little gem apparently actually dated from as long ago as 1957, when it was made in East Germany, presumably as a follow-up to worrying their poor kids over Stalin and Hitler in case they got too complacent. It wasn't shown over here until the 1970s, and had evil dwarves, talking plants and a mechanical fish among other delights, and was based on something by the Brothers (Very) Grimm. One of my children assures me the witch in *Chorlton and the Wheelies* was pretty darn scary, as well – but *TSRT* definitely takes the nasty pointy hat.

Later, to scare grown-ups and older kids, came Alan Garner's adaptation of his novel *Red Shift*, shown in 1978, a real forteen classic, covering three different time periods that interact

with each other. Perhaps more haunting than horrible, but highly memorable. The most horrible TV drama I recall from this era, though, was a play called *The Exorcism* (not to be confused with *The Exorcist*), in which two yuppie couples in 1972 find themselves haunted and ultimately destroyed by the spirits of poverty-stricken past occupants of their recently renovated country cottage. Some years later, while rehearsing my own stage play *Rehearsal*, about the Spanish Civil War, itself based on a haunting memory of dreams from my own childhood, I got chatting to a lady on a stall in the Eagle Market, which fronts directly opposite the foyer of Derby Playhouse. She told me her brother was also a playwright named Don Taylor, who had written a number of plays, one based locally called *The Roses of Eyam*.

I don't think she mentioned it at the time, but he had also written *The Exorcism*, and the following year, when my own entry was in the *Directory of Playwrights, Directors and Designers*, Don Taylor's entry was a few pages away from mine and I read up on *The Exorcism*, which apparently was produced as a disastrous 'unauthorised' version at the Comedy Theatre in 1975, when Mary Ure died on the second night. I remember having a weird experience while viewing the TV version when I 'saw' and said aloud 'OMG, there's a body on the bed!' several seconds before the actors did. (The body was actually invisible, as I recall.) I suspect *The Exorcism* may well go onto the list of jinxed plays, which include *Trespass* by Emlyn Williams, also about haunting and possession, and a certain Scottish Play. I believe *The Turn of the Screw*, in its various different formats, also has this reputation.

Brenda Ray

By email

Analogue angst

I was touched by the response to my article 'The Haunted Generation' [FT354:30-37], and fascinated by the resulting letters detailing readers' memories of these vague, disquieting feel-

ings, and the waves of analogue angst that seem to have been a pivotal element of so many 1970s childhoods. As 'Scarfolk' creator Richard Littler suggested in the feature itself, at times it really does feel like a support group. I was particularly interested in readers' recollections of 'haunted' experiences from ordinary, everyday life, beyond the creepy TV shows and Public Information Films detailed in the article. Richard Carey's evocative letter [FT357:74] detailing the cooling towers, abandoned wasteland and cursed corpses of his youth – with their accompanying urban legends of swinging nooses and disfigured daughters – chimed perfectly with my own memories of childhood unsettlement. Every neighbourhood had a mysteriously boarded-up residence to be avoided; no musty grandparents' house was complete without a permanently locked bedroom or closet ("You can go upstairs, but don't go in the back room"); and explanations for either were often cloaked in nudges, whispers and dark, oblique mutterings. I loved Ian Simmons's recollections of country dancing, too [FT359:72], and absolutely agree that this relic from an ancient, sepia-tinted era of "scratchy Percy Grainger records" was an integral part of primary school disquiet. If *Bagpuss* felt like TV made by the ghosts of the Edwardian children in the title sequence, then the faded, spectral crackles of Country Gardens were its musical equivalent.

Meanwhile, I think the 'lost shade' of late 1970s memory that was eluding Daniel Clay [FT357:75] ("A song about a witch... it contained the refrain 'a witch on a broomstick she flies by, eee-addi-addi-eee is her cry'") is from 'Witches Four', an episode of the BBC Schools and Colleges programme *Words and Pictures* first broadcast on 18 October 1982, and then repeated three times over the next 10 days, leading up to Hallowe'en. It's actually on YouTube, with the song being six minutes and 35 seconds in... (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNP7GqZz3h4>)

Heartfelt thanks to you all, and I'm so intrigued to hear

further memories of these feelings that I've set up an e-mail account, so if anyone would like to keep in touch then drop me a line at hauntedgeneration@gmail.com. I'd be delighted to take the support group one step further...

Bob Fischer

By email

Suspicious coins

Mythchaser [FT355:23] deals with yet another example of "burglars' signs". I don't have any strong opinions as to whether this is a real phenomenon or not; however, *Norsk Rikskringkasting As* (30 May 2017) published a story about burglars in the north of Norway using coins to mark houses worth breaking into. This was presented uncritically by the police, who urged homeowners to be on the lookout for coins outside their houses. From a burglar's point of view, this must be a rather hit-and-miss method, since a lot of people (like me) will automatically pick up coins for luck.

The report quoted a woman from Florø who was the first to report the occurrence. "I came home from a walk and made a careful check around the front door for garden snails. There was nothing there, not even a 1Kr coin. Next morning, there was a 1Kr coin outside the door." (A one kronor coin is worth about 10p.) The Facebook post was much shared, and several other people reported finding similar coins outside their doors.

"We had a message yesterday from someone who'd found a coin on her outside stairs," said Florø WPC Mona Aaboén. "We don't know what this is, but from earlier experience we ask people to be on the lookout for similar occurrences." Twitter message: "Police ask people to be alert if they find coins outside their front door, post-it notes on their mailboxes or the like. May be taggings for a later visit." The report asserted that "elsewhere in the country, tagging of front doors is a not uncommon modus operandi for burglars."

Nils Erik Grande

Oslo, Norway

IT HAPPENED TO ME...

First-hand accounts from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

How legends are born

Rob Grandy's 'Uneasy Riders' [FT358:42-47] deals with phantom hitchhikers, as told by the drivers. I thought you might be interested to hear a hitchhiker's side of the story, albeit involving cars rather than motorbikes. I am in my mid-seventies and live in a part of France full of steep hills and deep river valleys, where the roads are narrow and winding. It was a late winter morning, the roads slightly frosted but passable with care. I was driving to a local town via several small villages, one of which was high above a river valley.

The road beyond the village drops and twists steeply, so I drove cautiously. About halfway down, a thin mist filled the valley and the road straightened, running parallel to the river below. At the bottom there was a sharp turn to the left onto a bridge. A wooden barrier had been placed at the turn to prevent uncontrolled vehicles from falling headfirst into the river. To my horror I found that the combination of mist and frost had transformed the surface into an ice rink. I lost all control of my car, sliding faster and faster towards the barrier, but was just able to turn enough to hit it sideways rather than head on. The barrier broke, but the car stopped, teetering on the edge of the bank. I was unhurt, but shaken.

My car was too damaged to drive, so after I had pulled myself together I tried to call for help on my mobile phone, unsuccessfully because of the depth of the valley. I considered climbing up the road to the village, but it was steep, icy, narrow, and I didn't fancy being met by another slipping car, so I was sitting wondering what to do when I saw a large all-terrain vehicle of a type popular with local farmers approaching from the far end of the bridge. The driver stopped as I crawled carefully out of my car, and seeing that I was in trouble, offered me a lift.

After I had climbed into his car, he asked me where he



could take me. Knowing that just above the village there was a clear view from the local cemetery over the valley, so probably good reception for my phone, I turned to him and said, "Au cimetière [cemetery] s'il vous plaît." He gave me an odd look, but dropped me off at the gate and drove off – rather fast I thought. I walked a little way to get better reception, and only then thought how odd my request must have seemed, and what he might tell his family and friends: how he had picked up a pale, elderly hitchhiker climbing from a crashed car, and, after leaving him at the cemetery, had glanced in his rear-view mirror. There had been no one standing at the gate...

Christopher Hobbs
By email

Vanishing vehicles

One early autumn evening in 1999 I was the passenger in the back seat of my grandparents' car driving down a steep hill towards a humpbacked bridge near Cwmbran in South Wales when we saw what appeared to be a car with its headlights on approaching the bridge from the opposite direction. My grandfather pulled over

to let the 'car' cross the bridge and pass us. To our surprise it didn't appear on our side of the bridge. We continued and saw that there were no turnings off for the mystery vehicle to take. On one side was a steep bank and on the other was a fenced-off building with locked gates. On a gloomy evening a couple of weeks later I was a front seat passenger and my grandmother was at the wheel. This time we were approaching the bridge from the opposite direction. Again we saw a vehicle heading our way with its headlights on. My grandmother pulled over to one side but, again, the 'ghost car' didn't appear to cross the bridge. Had there once been a car crash here and were we seeing a sort of action replay?

Aaron V Adosa
Bryn Melyn, Swansea, South Wales

Irish Gnome

I previously wrote about my grandfather's encounter with a little waving gnomelike entity in the New Forest area [FT341:74], but this hasn't been the only occasion in which a family member has seen something like this.

On a bright sunny day in about 2013 I was at my family's home in West Cork. My mother and sister returned from shopping in the local village, excited to tell my father and me what they had seen. Driving home along a small country road, they had encountered a very short 'man' walking across the tarmac towards the overgrown hedge-verge. They had driven on for a few seconds when either my sister or mum exclaimed, "Did you see that?!" They were only startled afterwards, and both described and agreed upon what they had seen: a small humanoid-shaped creature with what looked like a long wedding veil draped over its head. This veil or shawl was slightly trailing on the road. My mum later indicated that the 'man' was only about 2ft (60cm) tall and was walking in a funny sort of hunched-over manner. As they drove past, he seemed to be disappearing into the hedge-verge. He seemed to have a strange grey colour. They found the colour very hard to describe, but it came across as being of an almost ethereal white-grey.

John Hope
Dorset

READER INFO

HOW TO SUBSCRIBE

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £48; Europe £58; USA \$89.99 (\$161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £68. Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

NORTH AMERICA (US & CANADA)

Subscribers should contact: IMS, 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 800-428 3003 (toll free); Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, EUROPE & REST OF WORLD

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times**, Rockwood House, Perymount Road, Haywards Heath, West Sussex, RH16 3DH. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.

Telephone payments and queries: 0330 333 9492.

E-mail payments and queries: customer@subscribe.forteanimes.com

HOW TO SUBMIT

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by FT readers and contributors in any medium or format.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteanimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO Box 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsutton@forteanimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate.

LETTERS

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteanimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

BOOKS, PERIODICALS AND REVIEW MATERIAL

Send to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP.

CAVEAT

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. FT can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

CLIPSTERS WANTED!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: **1 DECEMBER 2017**. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: **Fortean Times**, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK

E-mail: sieveking@forteanimes.com

or post on the FT website at www.forteanimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.

WHY FORTEAN?



FORTEAN TIMES is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an

intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

FT toes no party line.

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon, Janet Wilson. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Russell. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Terry W Colvin. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

FORT SORTERS

(who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Chris Josiffe, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

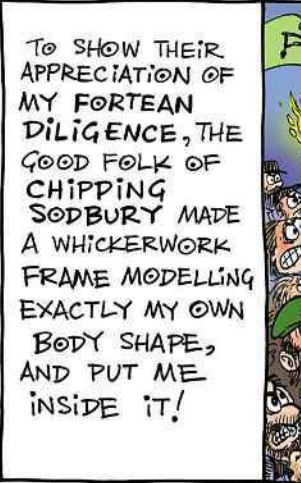
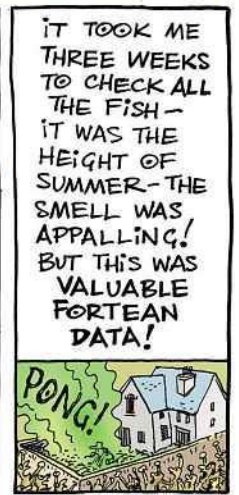
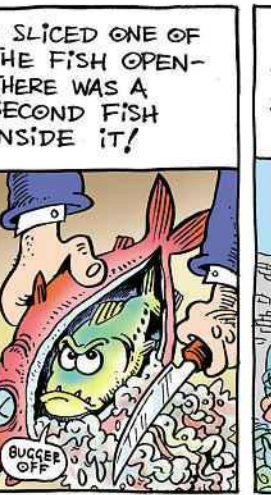
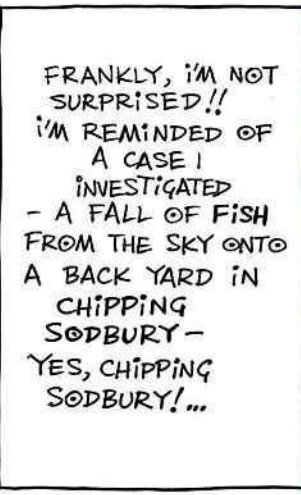
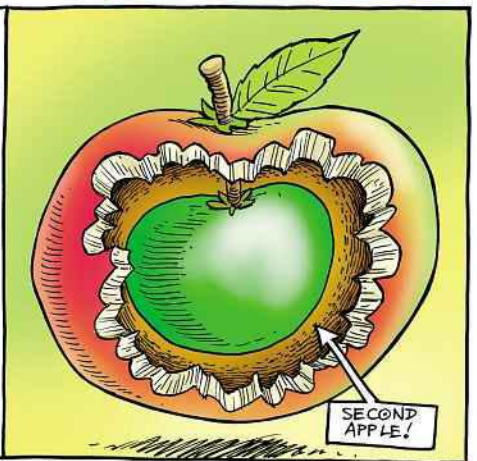
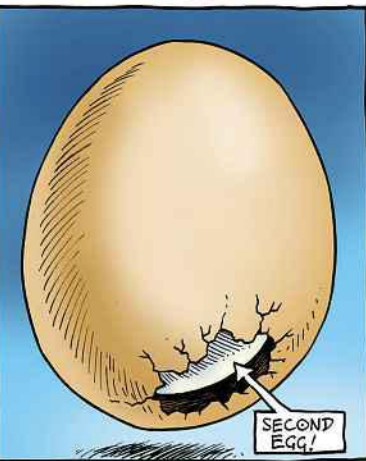
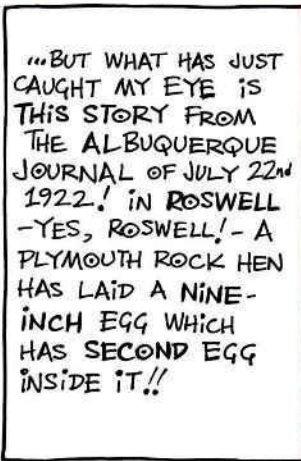
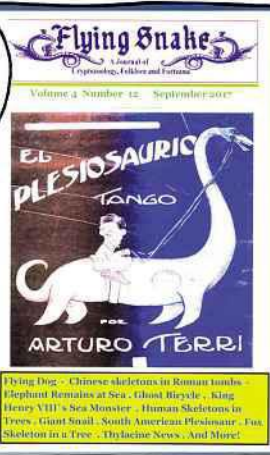
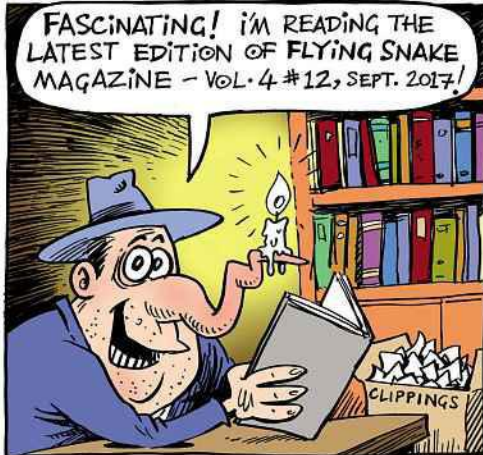
CLIPPING CREDITS FOR FT361

Gerard Apps, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Peter Christie, Terry Colvin, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Mike Dash, Tom Easten, Kate Eccles, JD Evans, Walter Fischer, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Alan Gibb, Anne Hardwick, Tony Healy, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Kevin Hubbard, Ernest Jackson, Robin Lee, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Greg May, Alan Murdie, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Tom Ruffles, Matt Salusbury, Paul Screeton, Tony Smith, Gary Stocker, Paul Street, Alex Swan, Frank Thomas, Chris Tye, Carole Tyrrell, Mike Wade, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Janet Wilson, Bobby Zodiac.

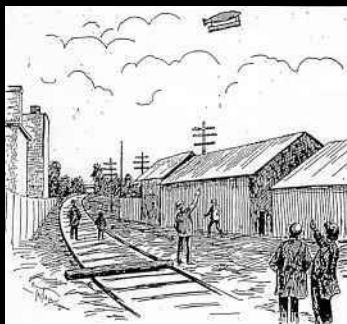
PHENOMENOMIX

HUNT EMERSON

with help from FLYING SNAKE,
a Journal of Cryptozoology and Forteana, compiled by RICHARD MUIRHEAD

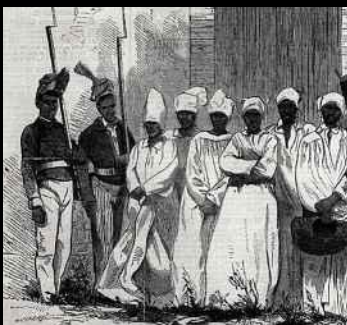


COMING NEXT MONTH



JUST HOT AIR?

PHANTOM AIRSHIPS AND OTHER
EXPERIENCE ANOMALIES



HORROR IN HAITI

THE CHILD MURDER THAT GAVE
VOODOO ITS BAD NAME



FAIRY CENSUS UPDATE,
FORTEAN MR PICKWICK,
KRAKEN SOUP
AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 362

ON SALE 4 JAN 2018

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Lim Ba, 68, a Malaysian Taoist medium, died after a "human steaming" ritual went wrong as he sat on top of a bubbling wok and was covered with a giant metal lid. He suffered a heart attack and burns during the elaborate ceremony performed during the Nine Emperor Gods festival at a Chinese temple. Witnesses heard banging coming from the metal lid after about half an hour of the priest becoming enclosed on top of the wok while sitting on a wooden platform. His son, present with other devotees, saw the lid moving. He was found unconscious, halting the ceremony in the Kuala Sanglang temple in the northern state of Kedah, and was pronounced dead at the scene. He had a decade of experience performing the stunt, with food such as sweetcorn and buns usually being steamed alongside him. His family had warned against him performing the ritual this year, as he had undergone heart surgery last year. *Sky News*, 26 Oct 2017.

On 21 April 2017, Sangmanee Jaratfah, 61, a famous Karen witchdoctor in Omkoi, northern Thailand, was shot dead by 15 bullets to the anus by a hitman, hired by a family who had allegedly been cursed, preventing the husband from defecating properly. Three days later, police arrested Somporn Ratcharoem (26), Athipan Ratcharoem (40) and Tang-yu Ratcharoem (39). They confessed to hiring the hitman to kill Sangmanee out of revenge for past curses and to help lift another curse. According to Somporn, 10 years ago his father was cursed and died soon after. The family tried to find out who had placed the curse, but to no avail. Recently, Tang-yu sought help from Sangmanee regarding complications with her husband Athipan being unable to defecate properly after a suspected curse. They asked the witchdoctor to lift the curse, but he asked for 100,000 baht (£2,280) to do so. Tang-yu, Somporn and Athipan concluded that he must have been the one who cursed Somporn's father a decade ago and decided to kill him. They paid a gunman three million baht (£68,385) to shoot him in the anus, which they believed would help lift the alimentary curse on Athipan. *City Life (Chiang Mai)*, 25 April 2017.

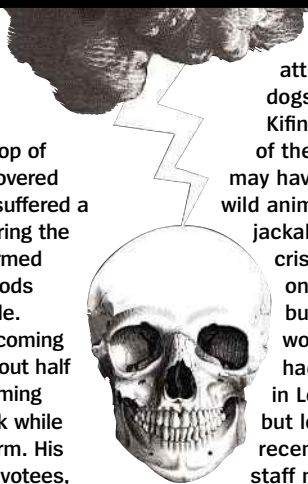
Celia Hollingworth, 64, from Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire, was found dead in northern Greece on 23 September. It was initially thought she had been

attacked by a pack of feral dogs, but coroner Nikolaos Kifnidis said that the condition of the body suggested that "she may have been attacked by other wild animals, like rabid wolves and jackals." Following the economic crisis, there are an estimated one million stray dogs in Greece, but wolves are common in the wooded region. Ms Hollingworth had tried to contact her relatives in London after being attacked, but lost signal on her phone. The recently retired University of Bristol staff member had taken a taxi to the archaeological site of Mesimvria near Maroneia. She was walking back along a coastal path to a guesthouse when she was attacked. *Sunday Mirror*, 24 Sept; *BBC News*, *Bristol Post*, 25 Sept; [PA] *Independent*, 26 Sept 2017.

A Pennsylvania schoolteacher on holiday in Mexico died on 14 August when she fell off a rooftop balcony after laughing too hard. Sharon Regoli Ciferno, 50, was with her daughter at a friend's house when she sat on a deck ledge that doubled as a bench. "She started laughing very hard and when she put her head back she lost her balance and fell back," said her brother, David Regoli. She died from multiple injuries. Alcohol was not a factor. *zergnet.com*, via *Fox News*, 18 Aug 2017.

An unnamed Japanese man died after he fell from a bridge while jumping for joy when his girlfriend agreed to marry him. The 32-year-old was in his girlfriend's car when he asked her to pull over in the middle of Irabu Bridge, which links the Miyako and Irabu islands in Japan, spanning 11,614ft (3,540m). He told her he wanted to take in the view, but then dropped to one knee and pulled out a ring. He was so overjoyed when she said yes that he climbed onto the bridge railings and spread his arms to celebrate. Seconds later he lost his balance and fell 100ft (30m) into the water below. Rescuers found his body seven hours later. He had been drinking. *Metro*, 7 Sept 2017.

A man is thought to have fallen to his death on his first night out to celebrate being 'clear' from cancer. Adam Fenton, 32, from Newquay, Cornwall, was found on Towan beach on 28 July. He was celebrating initial reports of his recovery after six months of chemotherapy to treat blood cancer. *BBC News*, 7 Aug 2017.



Why Not Be A Writer?

What our students say:



"I'm currently working on my **fourth book**, have been paid for my writing by at least 15 different magazines, and now **earn half my income from writing** – all thanks to The Writers Bureau's course."

Sarah Plater



"I enrolled in The Writers Bureau's Creative Writing course in the hope of **building my confidence as a writer** and ending my cycle of publishing failures. **I currently work as a content writer** with a writing agency and have even won a writing competition."

Walter Dinjos



"I won the 2015 Flirty Fiction Prima Magazine and Mills and Boon competition. The prize was **£500**, a three page feature in the magazine and the chance to work with Mills and Boon on my book. Also I have three stories in three anthologies with other authors – **we've raised almost £2,000 for cancer charities**"

Rachel Dove



"I have been published in different papers and magazines and am now producing around **250 articles a year**. It's going a bit too well at times! Seriously, it's very satisfying, stimulating and great fun – and thanks again to the WB for launching me on a **second career**. I meet so many interesting people and count myself mighty lucky."

Martin Read



"If you listen to the tutors and take time to read the material you can be a working writer, it really is an excellent course. I've found part-time work as a freelance writer for Academic Knowledge. I've earned just under **£2000** in the past year."

Steph Thompson



"I am delighted to tell everyone that the **course is everything it says on the tin, excellent!** I have wanted to write for years, and this course took me by the hand and helped me turn my scribbles into something much more professional. I am delighted that **my writing is being published and I am actually being paid**. All thanks to the Comprehensive Creative Writing course."

George Stewart

Being a writer can offer you a second income, extra spending money or it can even be a full-time career. It's your choice. But whatever your writing ambitions, we have a course that will help you to achieve them.

That's because our first-class home-study creative writing course contains all you need to know to **become a successful, published writer**. You learn how to write articles, short stories, novels, TV, radio, drama and more. You are shown how to develop your writing style, present your manuscripts, contact editors, find markets and **HOW TO SELL YOUR WORK**.

What's more, you do not need any previous writing experience to succeed on the course as it's suitable for the absolute beginner.

Throughout the course you will be **tutored by a professional writer**, who will offer constructive feedback on your twenty marked assignments. In addition, you can count on the support of our dedicated Student Services team who will do all they can to ensure that you get the most out of your studies.

When you enrol, your full course is sent to you on a **fifteen day trial**. Your studies are then flexible to your requirements. Moreover, we offer you a **full refund guarantee**. If you do not earn back the equivalent of your fees by the time you finish your course we will refund them in full.

So, if you would like to **learn how to earn from writing**, try our risk-free course. For a free prospectus visit our website or call our freephone number TODAY!

www.writersbureau.com

FREE CALL
24 HRS

0800 856 2008

Quote:
ATX17

YES! Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG

The Writers Bureau

Dept ATX17

Manchester, M3 1LE



www.facebook.com/thewritersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

email: 17W1@writersbureau.com Please include your name and address



Members of BILD
and ABCC

Enrol online to access your course modules TODAY at: www.writersbureau.com

\$4.99

PER ISSUE



A
MONSTER
APP

THE WORLD'S #1 HORROR MAGAZINE
IS NOW AVAILABLE PRIOR TO NEWSSTANDS
ON **IPHONE, IPAD, IPOD TOUCH AND PC/MAC.**
NOW WITH BONUS CONTENT, AUDIO AND VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS AND LOTS MORE!

VISIT RUE-MORGUE.COM @ THE  **APP STORE**

FOLLOW US ON **INSTAGRAM, TWITTER AND FACEBOOK**   